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Students' Perspectives Of Positive Behavior Interventions And Supports (PBIS): Examining One School's Approach

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STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND

SUPPORTS (PBIS): EXAMINING ONE SCHOOL'S APPROACH

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the perspectives of students on Positive Behavior and Interventions (PBIS) and its effect on school climate. Previous research highlighted a connection between student behavior and school climate. In individual interviews, participants were asked to describe the various factors that influenced their school experience, including their behavior in middle school as well as those that influenced school climate. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) and systems view of school climate (SVSC) were used as a guide for structuring research questions, designing interview questions, and analyzing and interpreting data.

The themes that emerged from the data were: 1) Peers, 1) Teachers, 3) School Climate, 4) PBIS, and 5) Family and Future. The themes represented the major influences on student behavior that were noted in participants' responses. The study's findings reinforced previous studies that identified a connection between student behavior and school climate. Additionally, the study found a strong correlation between relationship-building, student behavior, and school climate. Implications as a result of this study included: 1) continued implementation of PBIS, as well as a focus on alignment with other systems and factors that influence student behavior, 2) strengthening practices that promote positive relationships between students and teachers and students and their classmates, and 3) elevating student voice in all school practices.

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My dissertation journey has been filled with ups and downs. At times, I felt I was doing it badly, at times slowly, at times fearfully. Now, it can be called a goal…accomplished. I have many family and friends to thank as I reach the finish line.

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I must dedicate this work to my students, including my own children. You are my motivation to be a lifelong learner. This research was inspired by you, and I hope it serves you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) has become an increasingly popular framework for shaping behavior management in schools across the country. The term PBIS was first used in the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, after which it became the foundation for many school-wide programs (Kincaid et al., 2015). This framework is often implemented in hopes of improving school climate at the district, school, and classroom levels (Banks & Obiakor, 2015). Research by Banks and Obiakor (2015) connected PBIS to school climate by explaining its positive effect on reducing "difficult behavioral issues that impact climate" (p. 84). Several components must be considered in PBIS implementation, including appropriate, agreed upon expectations for behavior, conditions of the environment, explicit instruction in desired behaviors, and teacher biases and beliefs. One goal of the PBIS framework is to positively influence the behavior of individual students, which improves the climate of the entire school (Weist et al., 2018; Kincaid et al., 2015). These elements have led PBIS to be a strategy chosen by school leaders seeking to improve their school's climate.

Schools are complex systems, requiring continuous examination of practices and ongoing improvement. Meyers and Hitt (2017) conducted a review of existing literature on leadership and school turnaround and found that effective turnaround leaders focus on creating or improving school climate. Many factors, including philosophy, policies, and practices, influence a school's climate and culture (Ice, Thapa, & Cohen, 2015). Research by Bradshaw (2013) demonstrates the connection between PBIS and improvements in school climate and student outcomes. The relationship between PBIS and school climate is an important consideration within this study.

Similarly, the importance of understanding students' perspectives is a key foundation of this study. Discrepancies can exist between school data and staff perspectives and actual student perspectives of a particular practice (Gase, Gomez, Kuo, Glen, Inkelas, & Ponce, 2017). Understanding that PBIS is a framework, not a curriculum or scripted program, differing models of implementation lead to varied experiences for students. This research study focused on students' experiences and perceptions of a school-wide PBIS system in a middle school setting. Based on these experiences and perceptions, this study sought to examine the influence of a school-wide PBIS system on individual student behavior and its effects on school climate.

Statement of Problem

Educational leaders strive to create innovate school environments that are conducive to learning and shaping students' behaviors. Antisocial behaviors, such as aggression, isolation, attention deficit and hyperactivity, bullying, distracting comments or noises, inappropriate use of language, and non-compliance, displayed by students can adversely affect the learning environment (Dursley & Betts, 2015; Frydman & Mayor, 2017). Students who display these antisocial behaviors, among others, can be at a greater risk of school dropout (Orpinas, Raczynski, Peters, Colman, & Bandalos, 2014). School leaders and teachers seek to create positive school climates and classroom environments. PBIS aims to reduce problem behaviors and promote desired behaviors within a school or classroom (Kincaid et al., 2015). PBIS describes a general approach to addressing problem behavior; however, it has become a familiar practice in education, with documented implementation in over 20,000 schools in the U.S. (Kincaid et al., 2015; Horner et al., 2014). National PBIS data shows that 21 states report more than 500 schools implementing PBIS, and eight states reporting more than 1,000 schools implementing PBIS (Sugai & Horner, 2020). PBIS is considered an evidence-based approach as

it has been credited with improving student outcomes in academics and behavior, while decreasing behavioral infractions in many schools (Nocera, Whitbread, & Nocera, 2014; Bohanon, Wahnschaff, Flaherty, & Ferguson, 2018). PBIS is just one system within a school context and larger system and ensuring that all systems are functioning is a key component of school leadership (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). Integrating evidence-based practices and strategies, like PBIS, that focus on shaping positive student behavior can have wider effects on a school and its students (Nocera et al., 2014; Bohanon et al., 2018). Educational leaders look to evidence-based practices that promote positive student behavior to create school environments that are conducive to learning.

City School (pseudonym), an urban, middle-level charter school in Rhode Island, began implementing a universal system for behavior management based on the PBIS framework in 2011. Since implementation, the school experienced growth in student achievement as measured by state standardized testing and an overall decrease in behavioral infractions (Rhode Island Department of Education [RIDE], 2019a; RIDE, 2019b). Internal data for the 2018-2019 school year showed an increase in minor behavioral infractions documented by teachers, particularly for students in seventh and eighth grades (J. Doe, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Additionally, statewide SurveyWorks results showed a 17% decline in the school's percentage of favorable student responses on school climate indicators (RIDE, 2019c). This has caused for concern for the school's leadership team.

PBIS is still being implemented at City School; however, the school's leadership team questioned whether it could be improved to meet the needs of all students and positively impact the school experience for more students. Feuerborn, Wallace, and Tyre (2016) surveyed middle and high school teachers implementing PBIS and highlighted teachers' concerns about lack of

student involvement in the process of developing the school-wide system. Similarly, City School had not explicitly studied the experiences of its students within the school's behavior system. Understanding the experiences of its students could lead to improved implementation of the school's PBIS system.

Research Questions

A combination of Bronfenbenner's (1977) ecological systems theory (EST) and Rudasill's, Snyder's, Levinson's, and Adelson's (2018) systems view of school climate (SVSC) were used as a theoretical framework to address the following research questions:

1. Based on students' experiences, what is the impact of PBIS on the middle school climate?

   a. What are middle-school students' experiences and perceptions of positive behavior interventions and supports?

   b. Based on students' experiences, what element(s) of PBIS positively influence students' behavior and overall school experience?

2. What do middle school students perceive to be the impact of PBIS on overall student outcomes such as attendance and academic performance?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in Bronfenbenner's (1977) EST. Based on the EST, the systems view of school climate (SVSC) allows researchers to examine school climate and the impact of internal and/or external systems (Rudasill et al., 2018). Bronfenbenner's (1977) EST framework helps to explain that students experience school as a microsystem that "provides, prohibits, encourages, or restricts opportunities for intellectual and social development through progressively more complex interactions in the environment"

(Rudasill et al., 2018, p. 39). Rudasil et al. (2018) connect EST to school climate, viewing schools as a microsystem. EST and SVSC provided a lens through which the researcher examined the influence of PBIS on school climate and student behavior and outcomes. The focus on interconnectedness of systems and experiences may benefit from EST and SVSC as a framework.

Observing PBIS and measuring its impact on students' experiences is key to understanding the effectiveness of such a practice on both the individual's behavior and the entire school (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). Bronfenbenner's groundbreaking work established a foundation for modern school psychology (Burns, Warmbold-Brann, & Zaslofsky, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1977), through their theory, hypothesized that understanding the environment and context and the interrelations between multiple settings, or microsystems, is necessary to understanding individuals and their behavior. While Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory expands to include those settings or environments beyond a person's daily physical presence (e.g., a national financial crisis), the SVSC dissects the school microsystem into smaller nanosystems, which can include a grading system, curriculum, or a PBIS system (Rudasill et al., 2018). Nanosystems represent subsystems within a larger microsystem, or school context, with students at the center. This study readily aligned to the components of SVSC. Schools are microsystems, which rely on several factors and systems that ultimately influence school climate. Figure 1 demonstrates the various factors influencing school climate and the relationships between them. PBIS is one system, represented in Figure 1 as a school structure, that influences the school and its school climate. The researcher sought to determine the extent to which the PBIS system is a nanosystem that contributes to school climate as interpreted by the perceptions of students.

Figure 1

Systems View of School Climate Diagram of School Setting
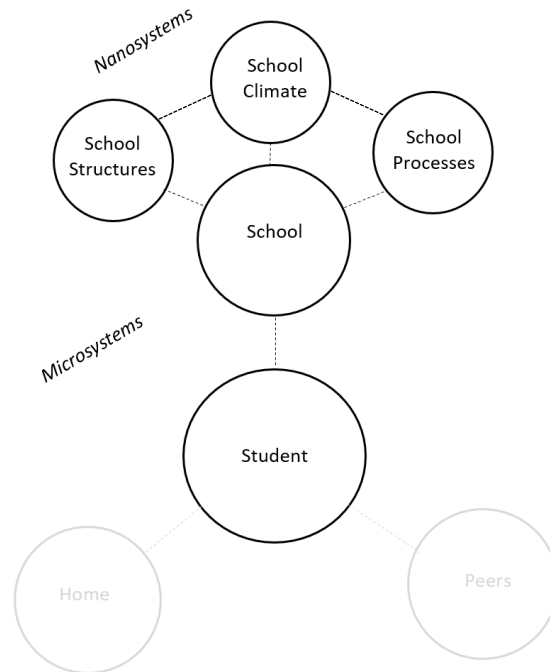
Note. This figure illustrates the layers of influence and relationships between systems impacting students' experience in a school setting. Modified from Rudasill et al. (2018).

Assumptions

Two major assumptions were present within this study. The researcher first assumed that the participant group would be representative of the total student population and that their experiences and perceptions of the school's PBIS system would reflect the entire group. The researcher employed a stratified purposeful sampling process to ensure that a range of subgroups were represented within the participant group. The process of stratified purposeful sampling allows a researcher to obtain a wide range of information (Palinkas et al., 2016). Stratified purposeful sampling in this study allowed the researcher to obtain a wide variety of perspectives (Palinkas et al., 2016). Secondly, the researcher assumed that students would openly share their

experiences and be able to communicate their perceptions of the school's PBIS system. The researcher was a member of the school community, which could have been an advantage when engaging student participants in conversation.

Limitations

Considering PBIS as just one nanosystem within a complex school organization, there are several factors that can influence a student's response. The researcher mitigated this limitation through carefully designed interview questions. An additional limitation of the study was the small sample size and the ability to generalize results from a single school setting. It was necessary for the researcher to focus on frequently addressed themes within participants' responses. The researcher's status as a member of the school community may have been a limitation, as unintentional bias can influence the process. Similarly, the researcher recognized that her position may impact participants' responses. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) discuss the importance of the effort taken to ensure validity within a qualitative study. Including children in research about their world is an important undertaking. Current researchers view children as dynamic participants in the research process and knowledge construction, particularly in the view of students as valued research subjects with different communication strengths from adults (MacDonald, 2013; Vaswani, 2018). MacDonald (2013) highlights a model of research that includes the view of young research subjects as the *social child*. Her research is based on the findings of James (1995), which outlines four ways of viewing the role of children as research participants. Appreciating the unique role middle school students played in this study was key to a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

One obvious concern when conducting research with children is the impact of power and the relationship between the practitioner researcher and students and their full participation.

Though, an explicit assertion of students as experts in the research can help to create a safe space (Aldridge, 2012). Establishing a comfortable environment for each interview was an essential component of data collection. Practices like allowing for sufficient wait time and being patient during times of silence to allow a student to collect their thoughts can help to create an environment in which students want to share their experiences and perceptions (Khoja, 2016). It was necessary for the researcher to provide assurances on confidentiality to elicit honest responses.

Scope

The research took place within a single, independent charter school. The school served 240 students in grades three through eight. Participants were limited to current eighth graders, as they had two full years of experience within the school's PBIS system and were better able to communicate their experiences and perceptions. The researcher collected data during the 2020-2021 school year.

Rationale and Significance

The popularity of the PBIS framework and its connection to school climate have led to its frequent examination. Weist et al. (2018) considered PBIS a critical component of a successful multi-tiered system of support necessary in improving students' emotional and behavioral functioning. Frequently implemented as a school reform effort, PBIS affects district policies, school practices, and student outcomes. The goal of this study was to illuminate the student perspective. The researcher, also a school leader, viewed this as an opportunity to provide a voice for the most important stakeholder group—students. The PBIS framework has led to the establishment of behavioral expectations, a system of consequences for negative behaviors, and interventions to support positive behavior. Several studies revealed a decrease in negative

behavior after PBIS implementation (Bradshaw, 2013; Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Gage, Grasley-Boy, George, Childs, & Kincaid, 2019; Hollingshead, Kroeger, Altus, & Trytten, 2016), but the researcher seeks to understand these results from students' perspectives. This study investigated the elements of the PBIS system, or other factors, that led to changes in student behavior as well as the impact on school climate. Results from this study may help school leaders understand why PBIS shapes behaviors from a student's perspective.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study.

Charter school – The state of Rhode Island defines charter schools as public schools authorized by the state. Charter schools authorized by the state are held to the goals approved in their charters, but often operate separately from certain state and local policies (RIDE, 2019d).

Evidence-based - A practice or program that has demonstrated effectiveness through validated research (Institute of Education Sciences [IES], n.d.).

Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) - An approach to supporting student behavior "that includes an ongoing process of research-based assessment, intervention, and data-based decision making focused on building social and other functional competencies, creating supportive contexts, and preventing the occurrence of problem behaviors" (Kincaid et al., 2015, p. 3).

School Climate - The collective principles and mindsets shared by members of the school community. Research reveals that a single definition of the term does not exist; however, a number of tools exist to measure and collect information on school climate (Olsen, Preston, Algozzine, Algozzine, & Cusumano, 2018).

Student Voice - Recognition of students' views and opinions that they hold regarding their educational experience (Byker, Putman, Handler, & Polly, 2017)

Conclusion

As one tool for improving school climate, PBIS is frequently studied within the field of education. School leaders consistently seek ways to improve school climate because it is shown to have a significant influence on student outcomes. While a great deal of existing research focuses on the impact of PBIS and school climate, this study sought to describe and interpret the experience of middle school students and their perceptions. EST and SVSC served as a framework for this study, which examined the various systems that influence students' behavior and overall school experience.

The first chapter described the study's purpose and rationale, with an explanation of the theoretical framework. The second chapter offers a review of the literature, focusing on PBIS, school climate, and student voice. The third chapter outlines the methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study. The fourth chapter presents the research findings, organized by themes and subthemes. The final chapter provides an interpretation of the findings, the study's implications, and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Measures of student behavior, particularly negative behavior, are often examined when considering the climate of a school. PBIS is a framework intended to increase positive behaviors displayed by students. The implementation of a behavior management system based on PBIS can be a common solution for school leaders attempting to improve the climate of their schools and classrooms (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Gase et al., 2017; Lawrence, 2017; Olsen et al., 2018). This study aimed to determine the impact of PBIS on school climate from the perspective of middle school students who have attended a school implementing a PBIS program. This literature review investigated PBIS (components of, impact of implementation, and inequities in implementation), school climate (impact of negative school climate, students' perceptions, impact on student subgroups, school-wide benefits, measures of, and connection to school leadership), and student voice (importance of and influence on school-wide practice).

Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions

Considering school climate as the quality of life within a school or one's experience of it, leads naturally to a discussion of the ways in which schools approach discipline. PBIS is one framework for managing student behavior at the school, classroom, and individual levels. Kincaid et al. (2015) examined and updated the definition of PBIS to include multiple components: data use, relationship-building, social skills education, prevention, and interventions. Historically, PBIS became a common practice for restructuring schools in the 1990s, to reduce punitive discipline practices (Kincaid et al., 2015). PBIS is a three-tier, proactive approach that includes: school-wide behavioral expectations and consequences, universal practices for promoting positive behavior, and interventions provided for students at increasing intensity depending upon need (Banks & Obiakor, 2015; Chitiyo & May, 2018;

Lawrence, 2017; Kincaid et al., 2015). Many studies correlate PBIS with positive school outcomes; however, fidelity and sustainability of implementation can impact the overall effectiveness of PBIS practices (Gage, Rose, & Kramer, 2019; Houchens et al., 2017; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). Its effectiveness can be measured through the perspectives of stakeholders (Feuerborn et al., 2016; Hollingshead et al., 2016; Houchens et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). These measures examine the impact on student behavior and school climate.

Components of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions

PBIS is a framework that is evidence-based and focused on improving systems and practices in support of student outcomes (Center on PBIS, 2019). The PBIS framework, while based on tiered support, has become a more fluid model since the early 2000s with less rigidity in tiers and less focus on labelling students and behaviors based on those tiers (Sugai & Horner, 2020). School-level components of PBIS work to promote positive behavior and prevent negative behaviors (Banks & Obiakor, 2015). Based on a need to replace punitive discipline practices, PBIS focuses on clear, universal expectations for student behavior and a system of recognition and rewards for those students meeting expectations (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Kincaid et al., 2015). Research has demonstrated that negative behaviors, like bullying, decrease when students report awareness of school and classroom rules and consequences (Laftman, Ostberg, & Modin, 2017). Consistency of rules and consequences at the school and classroom levels have also been shown to decrease negative behaviors (Johnson, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2016). Full, school-wide implementation over time is shown to dramatically impact positive outcomes for students, particularly students of color (Gage et al., 2019). School-level PBIS systems are designed to meet the needs of most students, while some may require additional supports to meet

expectations (Kincaid et al., 2015; Lawrence, 2017). Implementing a framework like PBIS requires understanding of its various components and focus on school-wide implementation.

Equally as important as preventing negative behaviors is intervening when problem behaviors do occur. Lawrence (2017) described intervention as a key component in the PBIS framework. Using data to identify needs at the school, classroom, and student levels, specific actions can be taken to provide support (Kincaid et al., 2015). Those components, referred to as tiers, of the PBIS framework increase in intensity to support students not meeting expectations (Cavanaugh, 2016; Gage et al., 2019; Kincaid et al., 2015; Weist et al., 2018). Research has shown that school-wide PBIS practices will provide enough support for 87.8% of students, with 7.9% of students needing additional supports and 4.3% of students requiring more intensive positive behavior supports (Sugai & Horner, 2020). The first layer of additional supports is typically administered to small groups of students, identified by need, which can include small-group instruction in social skills, coping skills, self-monitoring behaviors, or goal-setting (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Weist et al., 2018). High-quality, small-group interventions can decrease negative behaviors and reduce the number of office referrals administered to students (Eiraldi et al., 2019). A more intensive, individualized set of supports is designed for students displaying significant negative behaviors (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Weist et al., 2018). These interventions can include functional behavior analyses (FBAs) and individualized behavior modification plans (Gage et al., 2019). These components within a PBIS system aim to prevent and address problem behaviors; however, PBIS is just one evidence-based strategy among a host of options available to school leaders.

Supporting students' mental health is another important consideration for school leaders; finding ways to integrate PBIS with other social/emotional supports can lead to improved

outcomes. Research findings by Cook et al. (2016) pointed to the implementation of

social/emotional learning (SEL) programs in conjunction with PBIS practices to reduce negative

behaviors in the classroom, both internalizing and externalizing, as measured through teacher

observations. Compared to a non-PBIS approach, a combined PBIS-SEL approach led to

s*ignificant* and *observable* differences between the control and experimental groups (Cook et al.,

2016, p. 14). Similarly, Weist et al. (2018) found that joining PBIS with school-based mental

health services is an effective way to support students dealing with trauma, depression, and

anxiety. Additional research has shown a negative association between participation in a small-

group positive behavior intervention and overall severity of mental health disorders (Eiraldi et

al., 2019). School-wide PBIS practices and small-group interventions can serve as an additional

layer of support for students with mental health disorders (Eiraldi et al., 2019). Likewise, Gage et

al. (2019) found that PBIS implementation alone did not reduce incidents of bullying, but when

implemented alongside a bullying prevention curriculum could curb those negative behaviors.

Overall, a PBIS approach that integrates other evidence-based practices expands the menu of

interventions that can be provided to students to meet their needs in the classroom.

Impact of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions Implementation

One PBIS component that is key to implementation is the classroom approach to

decreasing negative behaviors. Several scholars have recently studied the relationship between

disruptive behavior and academic engagement in the classroom (Bunch-Crump & Lo, 2017;

Clair, Bahr, Quach, & LeDuc, 2018; Narhi, Kiiski, & Savolainen, 2017; Sinclair, Gesel, &

Lemons, 2019). Collectively, these studies found that when disruptive behavior in a classroom

decreased, students' academic engagement increased. Sinclair et al. (2019) noted that students

displaying disruptive behaviors typically had academic needs as well. Their study revealed that

implementing a peer-assisted intervention, focused on the classroom environment, decreased disruptive behaviors, and increased students' academic engagement (Sinclair et al., 2019). Similarly, Clair et al. (2018), in their study of teacher classroom management and behavior-specific praise, found that a positive approach to classroom management also decreased disruptive behaviors and increased academic engagement for students. A study of Check-In/Check-Out, a common intervention in many school-wide PBIS programs, also connected its implementation to a decrease in disruptive behaviors and an increase in academic engagement in participating classrooms (Bunch-Crump & Lo, 2017). Much of the previous research on disruptive behavior and its impact on academic engagement has focused on elementary-level classrooms; however, studies by Narhi et al. (2017) and Wills, Caldarella, Mason, Lappin, and Anderson (2019) investigated this at the middle school level. Their research suggested that similar classroom-level behavior interventions, including clear behavioral expectations, positive feedback, and clear consequences, yielded the same results for middle school students (Narhi et al., 2017; Wills et al., 2019). The research indicates that classroom-level interventions, aligned to PBIS, can have a positive impact on academic engagement by decreasing disruptive behaviors.

The effectiveness of classroom-level interventions and school-wide systems is dependent upon teacher behavior and, at times, their willingness to adopt a new practice. Teachers are essential to the implementation of classroom-level and school-wide PBIS practices. One study of classroom behavior revealed that bullying behaviors decreased when students reported adult intervention (Laftman et al., 2017). Research on PBIS implementation has shown that fidelity of implementation is a major obstacle in achieving long-term success in student outcomes (Cavanaugh, 2016; Chitiyo & May, 2018; Gage et al, 2019; Houchens et al., 2017; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). Tyre and Feuerborn (2017) noted the challenge of achieving full

implementation of PBIS within schools, highlighting staff support as a key to success. Open-ended responses from study participants revealed that almost one-third of staff cited concerns with administrative support, training, and fidelity of implementation (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). Fidelity and sustainability over time were two factors linked to a greater decrease in out-of-school suspensions in a study of PBIS schools in Florida (Gage et al., 2019). Houchens et al. (2017) found that schools with higher implementation fidelity also reported higher student achievement. Research by Pas, Johnson, Debnam, Hulleman, and Bradshaw (2019) found similar results in their study of the Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET), which measures fidelity of implementation. This study demonstrated a positive association between length of implementation periods and fidelity of implementation (Pas et al., 2019). Pas et al. (2019) also found that higher fidelity scores were linked to lower rates of suspension and truancy. Additionally, Houchens et al. (2017) studied teachers' perceptions through surveys, which revealed an improvement in overall perceptions of student behavior with increased fidelity of PBIS implementation. The potential impact of a PBIS program is significantly affected by the fidelity of teacher and staff implementation.

Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions and Middle Schools

Much research on PBIS implementation focuses on elementary schools, though PBIS is also employed in middle schools. Like elementary schools included in a study by Pas et. al (2019), middle schools with higher levels of fidelity of PBIS implementation also experienced lower rates of truancy and suspension. Similarly, Franks (2017) found that all participating middle schools implementing PBIS saw a reduction in suspensions and ten out of eleven schools demonstrated an increase in average daily attendance. Additionally, PBIS implementation has been associated with increase in middle schoolers' GPAs (Franks, 2017). Studies have revealed

specific aspects and/or effects of PBIS implementation in middle schools that have contributed to improved student outcomes: change in mindset, building positive relationships, sense of community, welcoming environment, consistency in expectations, and recognition of positive behaviors (Coyle, 2013; Franks, 2017; Goodman-Scott, Hays, & Cholewa, 2018; Hollingshead et al., 2015). Interviews with middle school principals in Franks's (2017) study revealed perceptions of a positive impact of PBIS on middle school climate, leading to increased attendance and students' time spent in classrooms. Conflictingly, a study of elementary and middle schools by Ryoo, Hong, Bart, Shin, and Bradshaw (2018) revealed no statistically significant impact of PBIS implementation on middle school student outcomes. Their results, however, suggested a need for additional research into school characteristics and resources to ensure that PBIS practices are aligned to overall school efforts (Ryoo et al., 2018). Adequate research exists that points to the benefits of PBIS implementation for middle school students; however, additional research is needed to discern the additional school practices that intermingle with its implementation.

Inequities in Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions Implementation and Outcomes

Recent research has focused on school and district characteristics and the process of adoption and implementation of PBIS. Reaching high levels of PBIS implementation is shown to have a positive impact on student outcomes (Houchens et al., 2017; Pas et al., 2019). Several school characteristics have been linked to a school's likelihood of achieving high levels of fidelity of implementation (Nese, Nese, McIntosh, Mercer, & Kittelman, 2018). The following categories of schools are more likely to implement PBIS with fidelity: elementary schools, non-Title I schools, and schools in suburban communities (Nese et al., 2018). Subsequently, many students in middle and high schools, Title I schools, and schools in urban communities are not

able to fully experience the benefits of a PBIS implementation with high fidelity. Interestingly, Kittelman, McIntosh, and Hoselton (2019) found that schools with higher numbers of students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch, which would include many Title I schools and schools in urban communities, were more likely to adopt PBIS as a schoolwide practice, but less likely to achieve high levels of implementation. Many schools are adopting PBIS practices to support and improve student behavior; however, the level of student outcomes is dependent upon fidelity and sustainability of these practices (Houchens et al., 2017; Nese et al., 2018; Pas et al., 2019). Based on these research findings, students in areas of most need are not benefiting from this evidence-based practice.

The impact of school disciplinary experiences for students is significant. There can be long-term, negative effects for students who experience frequent disciplinary action (Gage et al., 2019; Girvan, McIntosh, & Smolkowski, 2019; Welsh & Little, 2018). Unfortunately, students of color are disproportionately represented in discipline data at school, district, state, and national levels (Girvan et al., 2019; Skiba, 2014; Wegmann & Smith, 2019; Wilson, Yull, & Massey, 2020). The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) required that schools address issues related to disproportionality in special education referrals, which soon expanded to include disproportionality in exclusionary discipline practices, specifically out-of-school suspensions (Green, Cohen, & Stormont, 2018). Consequently, the federal government now requires state and local educational agencies to dedicate resources and enact policies and reforms to reduce disproportionality (Green et al., 2018). Since these federal requirements have been implemented, disproportionality in school discipline practices has become an important area of focus (Girvan et al., 2019). Understanding the impact of school disciplinary practices on students of color reinforces the need for high-quality systems to be implemented in all schools.

Disproportionality in School Discipline

The fatal school shooting in Columbine, CO, in 1999, followed by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, led to increased fear of violence, particularly in schools (Addington, 2019). Schools responded by developing zero-tolerance policies that promoted exclusionary discipline practices and heightened security on school property (Addington, 2019; Turner & Beneke, 2020; Wilson et al, 2020). Policies adopted and implemented to protect students began to target minority students (Triplett, Allen, & Lewis, 2014). Wilson et al. (2020) found that students of color were more likely to experience exclusionary discipline than White students. Similarly, Addington (2019) studied the experiences of Black girls, noting similar disproportionality in school discipline practices. This sequence of events and the resulting data provides a serious dilemma for school leaders.

Much of the research into disproportionality in school discipline focuses on out-of-school suspension rates (Girvan et al., 2019). More recently, Wegmann and Smith (2019) examined disproportionality and school discipline practices beyond out-of-school suspension. Their research findings focused on office referrals and warnings from teachers. Based on student self-reporting, African American boys were less likely to receive a verbal warning from a teacher or a warning conversation with a parent than their White peers, despite similar behavior patterns (Wegmann & Smith, 2019). This represents a major injustice for African American boys, as warnings provide an opportunity to improve behavior before a more serious consequence. Additionally, Wegmann and Smith (2019) revealed disproportionality within out-of-school suspension rates for male students of color and rates of non-exclusionary discipline for African American girls. These "differential consequences" (Wegmann & Smith, 2019, p. 18) pervade the discipline system. Girvan et al. (2019) extend these findings to larger data sets to best examine

and report similar issues of disproportionality. They identified a measure, the risk ratio, to represent disproportionality more clearly within school data (Girvan et al., 2019). The risk ratio simply focuses on whether certain groups of students face a greater risk of disciplinary action (Girvan et al., 2019). This data should represent a call to action for school leaders.

Research illustrates a spectrum of responses to the issue of disproportionality in school discipline (Green et al., 2018; Turner & Beneke, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). Wilson et al. (2020) examined zero-tolerance policies and the perspectives of district administrators on disproportionality data. Discussions with district administrators revealed a common response when faced with disproportionality data from their own district (Wilson et al., 2020). District administrators focused their responses not on race, but on the effects of poverty on student behavior despite data that controlled for socioeconomic factors (Skiba et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2020). Difficulty recognizing inequity in a system prevents school leaders from acting upon data. A reactionary response to support zero-tolerance policies was an increase in school resource officers assigned to U.S. schools (Turner & Beneke, 2020). Approximately half of all public schools in the U.S. staff a school resource officer (Diliberti, Jackson, & Kemp, 2017). The increase in the number of school resource officers heightened surveillance and was shown to increase exclusionary discipline practices (Turner & Beneke, 2020). Overall, perceptions of school resource officers are positive, despite the effect on school discipline (Turner & Beneke, 2020). Other research supports a more proactive response to reduce and prevent disproportionality (Gage et al., 2019; Green et al., 2018). School leaders focused on making change are seeking ways to evaluate and create new policies, like PBIS, that will promote equitable disciplinary practices (Green et al., 2018). Concerns about equitable disciplinary

practices in schools have been revealed by data and deserve a proactive response from all school leaders.

Research shows that PBIS implementation has a positive impact on school climate (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Houchens et al., 2017; Lawrence, 2017; Voight, 2015). Schoolwide implementation of PBIS practices have proven successful in promoting positive student behavior and overall outcomes (Gage, Rose, & Kramer, 2019). Current trends in school safety show that more schools are adopting zero tolerance policies and related discipline practices; however, these zero tolerance policies and their consequences have a disproportionate impact on students of color (Addington, 2019; Girvan et al., 2019; Turner & Beneke, 20202; Wilson, 2020). PBIS is a program that can provide schools with a framework to approach this important dilemma.

School Climate

School climate is an important aspect of a student's school experience. Olsen et al. (2018) define school climate as the school community's collective "beliefs, values, and attitudes" (p. 47). School climate reflects the quality of life and the overall character of the school environment (Gase et al., 2017; Olsen et al., 2018). School climate, positive or negative, has implications on many aspects of school life, including safety, instruction, and attendance (Gase et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2015). Studies of school climate are essential to the field of education.

Impact of Negative School Climate

A negative school climate can have a detrimental impact on a student's educational experience. Recent research has confirmed that a negative school climate can promote problematic behaviors such as bullying (Banks & Obiakor, 2015; Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). Twenty percent of American students between the ages of 12 and 18 reported being bullied at school in 2017 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). Bosworth and Jenkins (2014)

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concluded that punitive consequences alone do not deter bullying. Research by Juvonen, Schacter, Sainio, and Salmilvalli (2016) also showed that students' experiences of bullying can lead to negative perceptions of school climate, while participation in a school-based anti-bullying program can mitigate the impact of a bullying experience and lead to improved school climate overall. Practices that promote positive behavior, rather than only punish negative behaviors, can be one solution.

Additional research on the impact of a negative school climate looks beyond bullying and focuses on short-term and long-term effects on student outcomes. Studies reveal the connections between negative school climate and dangerous or delinquent behavior both in and outside of school (Sandahl, 2016; Shukla, Konold, & Cornell, 2016). Shukla et al. (2016) examined the correlation between students' negative perceptions of school climate and rates of dangerous behaviors, including violence, weapon possession, alcohol and marijuana use, and suicide attempts. Surveys of Virginia high school students revealed that those whose responses included self-reported dangerous behaviors also revealed negative views of their school's climate (Shukla et al., 2016). Conversely, their peers who reported positive perceptions of school climate reported lower rates of dangerous behaviors (Shukla et al., 2016). Similar findings were revealed in a study by Swedish researcher Sandahl, which found that school climate influenced teenage delinquency outside of school (Sandahl, 2016). Sandhal (2016) reported that Swedish high school students with negative perceptions of school climate had higher rates of delinquency, while the opposite was true of their peers with positive perceptions of school climate. This study also revealed that emotional support from teachers, or lack thereof, was the school climate indicator that could be linked to these student outcomes (Sandahl, 2016). These findings were supported by research by Johnson et al. (2016), which found that emotional support, as well as

clear rules and parental engagement, were school climate indicators that were associated with positive student perceptions. Additional research by Lenzi et al. (2017) found that students who reported increased feelings of a sense of community and teacher support also reported positive perceptions of safety at school. The study also found that students who reported those feelings of safety were less likely to miss school (Lenzi et al., 2017). Short-term and long-term effects of negative school climate point to its impact on student success on many levels.

Students' Perceptions of School Climate

Research has also shown a connection between students' perceptions of school climate and predictors of their future selves (Johnson et al., 2016; Reichert, Chen, & Torney-Purta, 2018). Reichert et al. (2018) found that high school students' perceptions of their school climate was linked to indicators of future civic participation, connectedness to school, and school participation. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2018) studied students' thoughts about plans for the future from an ecological model. Their study aimed to understand the impact of a student's context, or school climate, on their attitudes about their future (Johnson et al., 2018). These studies revealed that students with negative perceptions of school climate were more likely to have negative attitudes towards their future and could be less likely to be civically engaged (Johnson et al., 2016; Reichert et al., 2018). Disaggregated data showed that students who were considered academically at-risk had positive views of their future when they also had positive views of school climate (Johnson et al., 2018). Similarly, Daily et al. (2020) studied the impact of positive perceptions of middle school climate on students' high school performance. Their study found that a positive perception of school climate in middle school led to improved or sustained outcomes through high school (Daily et al., 2020). Students' perceptions of school climate can affect long-term outcomes the way they view their future selves.

Researchers have also examined the immediate, classroom-level effects of school climate. Rucinski, Brown, and Downer (2018) studied the experiences of third- through fifth-grade students and teachers. Results from this study revealed a discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions of school climate at the classroom levels (Rucinski et al, 2018). Results also demonstrated a correlation between teacher-reported classroom-level conflict, student- and teacher-reported aggression, and lower literacy achievement (Rucinksi et al., 2018). Like Sandahl (2016), Rucinksi et al. (2018) concluded that emotional support from teachers had a positive impact on students' perceptions of school climate. Additionally, Rucinski et al. (2018) discovered that students' perceived teacher-student relationship quality was predictive of depressive symptoms later in elementary school. This examination of the effects of classroom-level climate is important in understanding the experiences of individual students.

School Climate and Student Subgroups

Additional research highlights the importance of understanding the impact of a negative school climate on subgroups or individual students. Oftentimes school climate, whether positive or negative, is presented as a school-level aggregate (Cavanaugh, 2016; Lawrence, 2017; Olsen et al., 2018; Shukla et al., 2016). Shukla et al. (2016) examined within-school differences in students' perceptions of their school climate, noting that despite a positive overall rating of school climate individual students and/or subgroups could hold negative perceptions. Their study found that fewer African American students reported positive views of school climate (Shukla et al., 2016). Recent research has focused on another marginalized subgroup, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) youth, and how school climate shapes their school experience (Colvin, Egan, & Coulter, 2019; Hatchel, Merrin, & Espelage,

2019; Ullman, 2017). Examining the impact of school climate on all students is essential to a more complete understanding of students' educational experience.

School Climate and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning Youth

The impact of school climate on LGBTQ youth is the focus of recent research. Colvin et al. (2019) noted that LGBTQ youth were more likely to suffer from victimization in school and display depressive signs. However, LGBTQ youth who reported a positive school climate and supportive teachers, also reported lower anxiety and depressive symptoms (Colvin et al., 2019). Research by Ullman (2017) supports this finding, adding that transgender youth with positive views of school climate indicated that it was the positive environment created by teachers that led to their sense of belonging. The *protective role* of school climate and belonging and its impact on LGBTQ youth is critical in supporting all students throughout their school experience (Hatchel et al., 2019, p. 134). The effects of a negative school climate on marginalized subgroups and individual students reinforces the importance of creating a positive atmosphere in all schools and classrooms.

School Climate and Economically Disadvantaged Youth

The effects of a negative school climate can be detrimental for students living in neighborhoods with low socio-economic levels and high rates of violence (McMahon, 2018; Ruiz, McMahon, & Jason, 2018). Research by Ruiz, McMahon, and Jason (2018) focused on schools that meet success despite risk factors associated with the surrounding neighborhood. Students who viewed their school climate positively and perceived their school to be safe performed better academically than their peers who did not (Ruiz, McMahon, & Jason, 2018). They concluded that school climate, specifically students' perceptions of school climate and school safety influence students' academic performance (Ruiz, McMahon, & Jason, 2018).

Additionally, research shows that students' positive perceptions of school climate can lessen the negative effects of community violence and socioeconomic factors (McMahon, 2018; Ruiz, McMahon, & Jason, 2018). School climate impacts students' success in all communities.

Benefits for All Students

The school-wide benefits of a positive school climate cannot be overstated. One study by Skinner, Babinski, and Gifford (2014) noted that schools with positive school climates also report strong relationships between staff members and between students and staff. Similarly, Shogren et al. (2015) connected effective inclusion settings to a positive school climate, with students sharing their experiences of a positive school climate as one that promotes high expectations for all students, support, and connectedness to school staff and each other. Shogren et al. (2015) expand the influence of positive school climate to teacher relationships, instructional practices, and academic achievement. School climate shapes each student's educational experience.

Positive school climate improves outcomes for all students, regardless of subgroup status. Students with positive impressions of school climate engage in dangerous behaviors at lower rates than their peers and attend school at higher rates, resulting in increased instructional time (Lenzi et al., 2017; Sandahl, 2016; Shukla et al., 2016). Additionally, the effects of positive school climate also have an encouraging impact students' social-emotional well-being (Rucinski et al., 2018). Research also reveals a correlation between students' positive perceptions of school climate and their views of their future selves (Johnson et al., 2016; Reichert et al., 2018). The effects of a positive school climate can be seen even after a student promotes to another school (Daily et al., 2020). These findings illustrate the overall importance of a positive school climate.

School Climate in Middle Schools

School climate matters in all educational settings, including middle schools. Research demonstrates that outcomes improve for middle schoolers who attend schools with perceived positive school climates (Daily, Mann, Kristjansson, Smith, & Zullig, 2019; Daily et al., 2020). One key finding by Daily et al. (2020) related to positive school climate and its ability to shape middle school students' behavior. Likewise, perceptions of positive school climate have a positive impact on middle and high school students' academic achievement (Daily et al., 2019). These benefits have led researchers to call for further examination of the aspects of school climate that lead to positive perceptions of school climate and improved and sustained outcomes for middle school students (Bell et al., 2019; Daily et al., 2019). Bell et al. (2019) studied Latinx students in a large, urban middle school. Their findings indicated that many components of a school program impact school climate and should be investigated further (Bell et al., 2019). Similarly, Daily et al., (2019) suggested additional research was needed into school-based programs and interventions. Research into middle school students' perceptions of school climate and specific school practices that can improve school climate is needed.

Measures of School Climate

The creation of a positive school climate does not necessarily depend upon a step-by-step process, and oftentimes several factors influencing school climate can also be viewed as outcomes. However, if school climate is an important catalyst for and/or result of other initiatives, then school leaders must focus on its development. Research by Lawrence (2017) and Banks and Obiakor (2015) revealed the need for school-wide approaches to establishing a positive school climate. Both studies discussed the importance of a proactive approach, with school leadership establishing a plan to create and maintain a positive school climate (Banks &

Obiakor, 2015; Lawrence, 2017). One dilemma exposed by the National School Climate Council (NSCC) is the need for precise methods to measure school climate, concluding that many districts do not have the data necessary to accomplish this task (2007). Similarly, Olsen et al. (2018) reviewed and analyzed school climate measures and found that schools were facing obstacles related to data and effectively measuring school climate. Yet, there are available data schools can use or begin to collect new data to measure school climate (Cavanaugh, 2016; Olsen et al., 2018). School leaders can begin the complex task of building or maintaining positive school climate by focusing on available data.

The United States Department of Education (2014) promotes an approach to school climate that focuses on safety, both physical and emotional, and engagement. Taken individually, some schools and researchers have identified ways to measure each of the three parts. Cavanaugh (2016) examined school climate as reflected through schools' discipline referrals, a decrease in office referrals meant an improvement in school climate. Similarly, Lawrence (2017) studied school climate through school-level reports of bullying behavior. Analyzing this type of data, office referrals and reports of bullying behavior, was deemed especially helpful in planning for school climate and reducing instances of problem behavior either school-wide or for individuals (Cavanaugh, 2016; Lawrence, 2017). This was supported by the research of Olsen et al. (2018), which emphasized the importance of using data that is readily available in schools to effectively measure school climate. One additional layer of data that can help researchers and school leaders understand school climate are parents' perceptions of a school's climate (Schueler, Capotosto, Bahena, McIntyre, & Gehlbach, 2014). Schueler et al. (2014) studied a measurement tool that revealed more positive perceptions of school climate among parents of younger students, that clarifies students' attitudes towards school. While readily

available, these types of quantitative data are not the only useful data that schools can collect and analyze.

Collecting and analyzing data on stakeholders' perspectives is proving to be as useful and insightful as readily available quantitative data. Olsen et al. (2018) found four valid and reliable tools for measuring school climate through stakeholders' perspectives: 1) *Comprehensive School Climate Inventory*, 2) *School Climate Assessment Instrument*, 3) *California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey*, and 4) *Meridian School Climate Survey*. The tools themselves were so unique that the decision on which tool to use would depend on the context of its use. The research revealed that though measuring all facets of school climate is complex, it is a necessary task for school leaders and educational researchers. Gase et al. (2017) connected measures of school climate to the Whole Child model, which focuses on the experiences of students and other stakeholders. This type of information cannot always be captured by quantitative data. Research by Houchens et al. (2017) collected data from the perspectives of teachers on school climate and a school-wide PBIS program. Their results revealed rich information on the school's climate regarding teachers' feelings towards community investment and staff unity. While a gap in research on students' perspectives may exist, one such study by Shogren et al. (2015) investigated students' perspectives on inclusion and school climate. The results painted a full picture of the school's climate, highlighting students' feelings of connectedness to school staff and principals and acknowledgement of high expectations. Without research into stakeholders' experiences, particularly students, school leaders may miss valuable insights and opportunities.

Examining multiple data points is essential in gaining information on a school's culture. Researchers have found that the use of data, both quantitative and qualitative, to inform school climate and school turnaround work is essential for effective school leaders (Bosworth &

Judkins, 2014; Gase et al., 2017; Ice, Thapa, & Cohen, 2015; Lawrence, 2017; Meyers & Hitt, 2018; Olsen et al., 2018; Shogren et al., 2015). Understanding the nature and causes of negative behaviors, which impact school climate, is vital to prevention and intervention (Cavanaugh, 2016; Lawrence, 2017). School turnaround research shows that educational leaders who focus on action planning to prevent problem behaviors can improve climate (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014, Lawrence, 2017; Olsen et al., 2018). A key data point that is often missing is the perspectives of students. A study by Gase et al. (2017) led researchers to conclude that all school improvement efforts must include student voice. School leaders are often faced with a need for turnaround in their schools, having a wide variety of data that includes student voice can assist with this task.

Connection to School Leadership

The need for a clear plan to address school climate is an important task for school leaders. In their research on school climate measures, Olsen et al. (2018) found that to have a safe and healthy school, school leaders must focus on prevention to improve school climate by setting clear expectations and consequences for student behavior. Similarly, Lawrence (2017) found that, in addition to prevention, a system of support for students not meeting expectations that includes evidence-based interventions must also be part of a turnaround plan. Most importantly, any approach to student behavior that is also intended to improve school climate must be comprehensive. Research by Bosworth and Judkins (2014) highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach that is not punitive, but proactive and positive. School leaders who strive to create and maintain a positive school climate will enact a proactive and positive approach that utilizes data to identify and prevent negative behaviors, leveraging the impact of positive relationships between students and adults in the school community (Lawrence, 2017). Meyers and Hitt (2018) studied school turnaround, finding great potential in plans focusing on

school climate; they refer to these plans and practices as "quick wins" (p. 362) for turnaround principals. Understanding the impact of and how to improve school climate is essential to the success of all school leaders and, subsequently, students.

Student Voice

Most researchers working in the field of education agree that promoting student voice is a valuable practice in schools. Oftentimes, educational research is conducted by investigating topics from an adult lens (Bergmark & Kostenius, 2018). Fortunately, student voice has become an important consideration in education over the past three decades, as students are seen as consumers (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Some practitioners, however, are hesitant to embrace student voice, which may be due to a disconnect between student and adult perceptions and often leads to student voice being dismissed (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2017; Biddle & Hufnagle, 2019). Student voice challenges the authoritarian system that is present in many schools (Biddle & Hufnagle, 2019). If student voice is not embraced, educators may be missing critical data and insights. Research shows that, when prompted to provide feedback, students are "thoughtful [and] strategic" in their responses (Pazey & DeMatthews, 2019, p. 945). Kane and Chimwaynge (2014) described students as articulate and able to communicate a wide range of needs and ideas related to their learning. Students' perceptions of their education experience, including school climate and discipline practices like PBIS, are a valuable data source for researchers and school leaders.

Importance of Student Voice

Several international agreements and policies have also promoted the importance of student voice in schools. Mayes, Finneran, and Black (2019) set their research within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international agreement adopted

thirty years ago. This agreement calls for the participation of students in decision-making matters in education. Student voice as a practice in schools is necessary, but also difficult in ensuring that all students' voices are heard (Mayes, Finneran, and Black, 2019). Similarly, Messiou (2019) used the Salamanca Statement and Incheon Declaration as a foundation for research into student voice, as both documents focus on inclusive education and the role all students should play as owners of their education. Students' ownership of their education is directly tied to their feelings of buy-in in school policies and practices (Martinez et al., 2019). Martinez et al. (2019) studied the impact of student voice as a developmental need of adolescents, noting a positive impact on PBIS implementation. The importance of student voice in education transcends systems and borders, but the impact can begin at the classroom level.

A great deal of literature on student voice discusses the impact on the teaching and learning environment at the classroom level. Ng (2018) studied the effect of student voice on reading engagement in an elementary classroom. This case study focused on the engagement of students during a silent reading period before and after the classroom teacher sought and acted upon feedback from her students. Individual student interviews allowed the teacher to inquire about reading interests, seating preferences, and other student needs. Results showed an immediate increase in reading engagement after the teacher made changes to the classroom environment based on students' feedback (Ng, 2018). Additional studies by Mayes, Finneran, and Black (2019) and Byker, Putman, Handler, and Polly (2017) report on the positive impact student voice can have on student engagement, student leadership skills, and teacher-student relationships in the classroom. However, constraints are often placed on student voice, which results in controlled choice rather than voice in decision-making (Byker et al., 2017; Charteris &

Smardon, 2019). These studies demonstrate the impact of student voice on the classroom learning environment.

The overall impact of student voice is dependent upon the depth with which educators seek and act upon the information received. School principals in a study by Charteris and Smardon (2019) reported using student voice most often to gauge student learning and progress towards curriculum targets and to measure satisfaction with new initiatives. This research revealed that though this can have an initial positive effect, staying within these collection parameters does not allow student participation in policy and decision-making (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). A similar limitation is often placed on the voice and input of undergraduate students as well (Martens, Spruijt, Wolfhagen, Whittingham, & Dolmans, 2019). Another study examined perceptions of undergraduate students, finding that students felt their input was limited to suggestions with little to no follow-up or dialogue (Martens et al., 2019). Conversely, research by Messiou (2019) focused on a student voice program that partnered teachers and students in action research. Results from several primary schools across Europe showed that student engagement and confidence increased when they were included in collecting data on student voice and shaping lessons with teachers based on student feedback (Messiou, 2019). Cefai and Cooper (2010) highlighted the most critical aspect of student voice, engaging students in the decision-making process to actualize their opinions and ideas. Student voice can be used to transform and improve practice and policies, which can include PBIS implementation though few studies focus on students' perceptions (Carter et al., 2017; Messiou, 2019). The literature reveals a clear difference between soliciting students' opinions and including students in a feedback and improvement process.

Pazey and DeMatthews (2019) examined student voice at a high school undergoing transformation as guided by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to understand the impact of reforms from the perspective of students. The school and its staff and students had experienced major changes in leadership, staffing, and school policies and practices. Student focus groups revealed a decrease in student engagement as students progressed in grade levels, feeling excited as freshmen, and disenfranchised as upper classmen having experienced school reforms throughout their high school careers. Pazey and DeMatthews (2019) concluded that student voice needed to be elevated as a turnaround strategy within the school's improvement plan. Students were willing to engage in "ongoing advocacy based on their core values and practical beliefs about what it takes to reform a school" (Pazey & DeMatthews, 2019, p. 945). School reform efforts must consider the experiences of students when planning school improvement, redesigning school policies, and addressing problems (Harris et al., 2014). These findings are aligned to research related to PBIS implementation (Hollingshead et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2019). Student voice engages the most important stakeholders in the school community.

Brasof and Peterson (2018) examined the effect of a Youth Court on student perceptions of discipline in three urban schools. Initial observations and focus groups revealed students' feelings towards their school's discipline practices, with many referring to the practices as unfair and "disproportionately harsh" (Brasof & Peterson, 2018, p. 838). The researchers studied the impact of a Youth Court on these perceptions, finding that students were better able to accept discipline consequences when they were given by a group of peers (Brasof & Peterson, 2018). These findings have an impact on school practices and school climate. Norton, Gold, and Peralta (2013) also studied Youth Courts in Pennsylvania and found that students who participated showed stronger academic performance, better attendance, increased engagement, and improved

organization. These are additional benefits that contribute to the climate of the school. Brasof and Peterson (2018) connect the success of the Youth Court to the legitimacy of the schools' discipline system. Baroutsis, Mills, McGregor, Riele, and Hayes (2016) studied a similar practice, a community forum, in an Australian alternative school for secondary students. Community forum periods allow school staff and students to discuss issues within the school community, which could include student behavior and school discipline practices (Baroutsis et al., 2016). It is possible that practices like a Youth Court could be integrated with PBIS implementation to increase effectiveness through student voice. When school leaders understand the importance of student voice and base decisions on it, the effects can reach beyond one initiative.

Student Voice in the Middle School

Student voice can play an important role in the middle school experience. Overall, student voice opportunities can lead to increased levels of active citizenship, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, reflection, communication, leadership, and commitment to school and community (Caetano, Freire, & Machado, 2020; Gordon, 2019; Sharma-Brymer, Davids, Brymer, & Bland, 2018). Middle school leaders can look to student voice as a tool for school improvement (Caetano et al., 2020; Kahan & Graham, 2013). Kaham and Graham (2013) concluded that soliciting student input was one solution to a school's dilemma related to students dressing for gym class. Caetano et al. (2020) noted that shared leadership of school projects with students and staff resulted in a positive school environment and middle schoolers advocating for opportunities for student voice for younger students. Additionally, Hanson, Polik, and Cerna (2017) conducted research on the impact of student listening circles, an opportunity for middle school students to share their experiences and provide feedback on school-related topics. Their

research found that participation in these student listening circles did not impact students' perceptions of school; however, their findings concluded that staff followed through with students' suggestions (Hanson et al., 2017). These studies highlight the positive impact student voice can have on middle school students' development, the overall school environment, and school improvement efforts.

Potential Influence on School-Wide Practice

Biddle and Hufnagle (2019) acknowledge that embracing student voice is often a struggle for many educators. Their research examined the experiences of high school students and teachers engaged in work around student voice. They found that when analyzing student voice through survey responses, students worried about how the results would be received and teachers attempted to rationalize and even dismiss students' views (Biddle & Hufnagle, 2019). Their observations revealed the emotional nature of the work for both students and teachers (Biddle & Hufnagle, 2019). Similarly, Carter et al. (2017), in their study of students' perceptions of teachers' expectations, revealed the tension between students' and teachers' perceptions. They concluded that, despite the disconnect, student voice exposes their "realities, and our commitments to helping all students achieve their maximum learning potential requires that we attempt to understand their worlds as they see them" (Carter et al., 2017, p. 13). This attempt to understand extends to all students, including underserved subgroups such as students with disabilities and racial minorities.

All students are key stakeholders in all school communities. The voices of all students should play a key role in shaping schools' practices and policies. However, the voices of children and adolescents are often overlooked as a marginalized population (Baroutsis et al., 2016). Moreover, this should also include underserved subgroups. The voices of students who comprise

these subgroups are especially important because they are typically under-performing when examining standardized tests and overrepresented in school discipline (Banks & Obiakor, 2015; Gage, Grasley-Boy, George, Childs, & Kincaid, 2019; Pazey & DeMatthews, 2019). It is necessary for school leaders to understand how policies and practices impact particular groups of students (Thiessen, 2007). This information is important feedback for school leaders, who are charged with evaluating school practices. Student voice can, however, shed light on issues within a school, which is also valuable information for school leaders. Understanding the experiences of students can help school leaders correct issues related to disproportionality in school discipline (Girvan, McIntosh, & Smolkowski, 2019; Skiba et al., 2014; Wegmann & Smith, 2019; Wilson, Yull, & Massey, 2020). The research of Carter et al. (2017) uncovered important perceptions of students of color. Students of color recounted experiences and feelings that suggested teachers held lower expectations for them and assumed their intellectual inferiority (Carter et al., 2017). These perceptions were shared by White students as well (Carter et al., 2017). The results of this research are unsettling, but essential to the improvement of educational experiences for students of color.

Welcoming student voice into the decision-making processes in education is necessary for the success of all students. Research highlights the impact at the classroom and school levels when student voice is solicited and acted upon. Overall, the research reveals that student voice is often solicited, but at times dismissed or limited (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Educators who operationalize student feedback see positive changes in the learning environment (Messiou, 2019; Ng, 2018). Research in the field of education is constantly evolving; student voice is increasingly looked to for valuable insights.

A Gap in the Literature

Numerous scholars have written extensively about PBIS, while few have examined this framework from the perspective of students (Carter et al., 2017). Similarly, PBIS and its connection to school climate is well-documented in the literature (Voight, 2015); however, a need for research into school climate and direct connections to student outcomes exists (Daily et al., 2019). An examination of recent research reveals that the relationship between student perspectives of PBIS and school climate is under-explored. Therefore, the goals of this study are: 1) to understand students' perspectives and experiences of their school's PBIS practices, 2) to understand the impact of PBIS practices on students' behavior and overall school experience, and 3) to examine the impact of PBIS on school climate. This study placed PBIS within the system of the entire school. Studying the perspectives of students on PBIS can determine what components of the PBIS framework, or other factors, impact their behavior and experiences and the school's climate.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) EST provides a clear framework for examining students' perspectives of PBIS and its impact on school climate. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), it is impossible to understand an individual's behavior without studying the environment in which the individual functions. Recent applications of EST look to the interrelatedness of the person and the context (Arnold, Lu, & Armstrong, 2012; Burns, Warmbold-Brann, & Zaslofsky, 2015; Cross, 2017). The research presented in this chapter correlates student behavior and school climate, with PBIS serving as one means to improve student behavior at the school, classroom, and individual levels. The EST is an important framework through which to view PBIS and its impact on school climate. There are many systems and factors that fall within the EST that

influence students' behavior, including, but not limited to, school structures, peers, community, and home life (Lee, 2011; Kohl, Recchia, & Steffgen, 2013, Rojas & Avitia, 2017; Xia, Fosco, & Feinberg, 2016). Rojas and Avitia (2017) highlight EST because it acknowledges all the factors that influence students' behavior. Kohl, Recchia, and Steffgen (2013) found that all levels of systems contribute to a school's overall climate. This study intends to investigate PBIS as a system that influences school climate. The EST has helped in gaining a better understanding of many phenomena, including bullying, school violence, and peer interactions (Burns, Warmbold-Brann, & Zelofsky, 2015). Following a meta-analysis of school psychology research, Burns, Warmbold-Brann, and Zelofshy (2015) concluded that: 1) further research was needed to investigate the effects of the school environment on student outcomes, and 2) the EST should be used by researchers to study school climate. These concepts create a strong foundation for studying the impact of PBIS on school climate through the perspectives of students.

Conclusion

Researchers have studied the impact of both school climate and PBIS on student outcomes. School climate, whether positive or negative, has a significant impact on a student's experience (Gase et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2015). School leaders often focus on student behavior to improve school climate, with PBIS being a framework that is frequently adopted due to positive results in shaping student behavior (Banks & Obiakor, 2015). Successful implementation of PBIS is not a guarantee, particularly for schools serving minority student populations (Kittelman, McIntosh, & Hoselton, 2019; Nese et al., 2018). Schools are complex systems with several practices and policies working together to influence its functioning (Kohl, Recchia, & Steffgan, 2013). Existing research leaves questions on the impact of PBIS and its

components on students' perceptions of school climate and their overall school experience.

Further research is needed to fully understand the impact of PBIS on school climate.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the perspectives of middle school students who experienced a PBIS behavior management system and its impact on school climate. Qualitative data was collected through individual interviews with eighth-grade students. Qualitative phenomenological methods were chosen to illuminate the lived experiences of middle school students whose school implemented a PBIS framework to understand its impact on school climate.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to understand the influence of PBIS on school climate through an exploration of the middle school student experience. School climate can positively or negatively impact a student's educational experience, as it has been shown to influence student outcomes (Gase et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2015). Similarly, PBIS implementation is also linked to improved student outcomes (Gage et al., 2019; Houchens et al., 2017; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017). The researcher hoped to identify specific elements of PBIS practice that influence school climate. PBIS and school climate are two aspects of daily school life experienced by many students in the U.S. This study employed a phenomenological research design to describe and interpret the experiences of middle school students who had firsthand knowledge of PBIS implementation.

Research Questions and Design

A combination of Bronfenbenner's (1977) EST and Rudasill's et al. (2018) SVSC were used as a theoretical framework to address the following research questions:

1. Based on students' experiences, what is the impact of PBIS on the middle school climate?

   a. What are middle-school students' experiences and perceptions of positive behavior interventions and supports?

   b. Based on students' experiences, what element(s) of PBIS positively influence students' behavior and overall school experience?

2. What do middle school students perceive to be the impact of PBIS on overall student outcomes such as attendance and academic performance?

These research questions were developed based on potential for exploration of students' experiences and perceptions within the chosen site. Following a comprehensive literature review, the set of research questions was refined to fit a phenomenological approach, focused on students' perspectives. Findings from the literature review highlighted the importance of student voice in examining school practices. Additionally, the literature review indicated correlation between PBIS implementation and student outcomes. This connection was also examined through students' perceptions.

Phenomenological research methods were used to conduct the study to answer the research questions listed above. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that allows for an in-depth study of humans' lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). This structured qualitative approach can lead to a greater understanding of a phenomena based on a deep understanding of the experiences of a small group of individuals (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This study focused on the experiences of a small group of middle schoolers to gain useful information about PBIS and its impact on school climate.

Site Information and Population

This phenomenological study was conducted at an urban charter school in the Northeast. City School opened in 2009, first serving 240 students in grades six through eight. Its overall track record of success led to an approved reconfiguration of grades in 2018. The reconfiguration process is overseen by the state Department of Education's Office of Charter Schools. During the 2020-2021 school year, the school served 240 students in grades three through eight. The school's staff included three district-level administrators, two principals, 16 classroom teachers, three special educators, four itinerant teachers, four academic coaches, four classroom assistants, one guidance counselor, one school nurse, two school social workers, two behavior specialists, two family engagement specialists, one alumni coordinator, and five operations staff. City School began implementing PBIS during the 2011-2012 school year.

The school site is in a densely populated, urban community, which is home to many immigrant families. The most recent Census information calculates the median family income to be $28,798, almost $40,000 less than that of the state (Kids Count, 2018). City School's student population includes students who qualify for free or reduced-priced meals (93%), students who are English language learners (22%), and students with disabilities (14%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Demographically, the student body is comprised of students who are Hispanic (93%), White (5%), and Black (2%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The research participants included eighth-grade students who have attended the school since sixth grade. Demographics and student characteristics of the eighth-grade cohort mirrored those of the school.

Sampling Method

The research sample was a key consideration in this study. Phenomenological studies aim to collect qualitative data from a relatively small research sample to describe and interpret the participants' reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher included one-quarter of the eighth graders at City School as research participants. There were 40 students in the eighth-grade cohort, which comprised one-third of City School's total middle school population. To recruit participants, the researcher facilitated brief informational sessions with groups of students during lunch periods. Informational sessions reached all 40 students and provided an overview of the goals of the study and the data collection methods. The researcher distributed parental consent forms to all students. Following the informational sessions, the researcher disseminated information and consent forms directly to parents via email. Interviews were scheduled over an approximate two-week period, as signed consent forms were returned.

Purposeful sampling was used to include research participants who could best help to answer the research questions. Specifically, homogeneous sampling ensures that all research participants share a trait or characteristic (Creswell, 2015). All research participants were eighth graders who had experienced a school wide PBIS program throughout their middle school years. The researcher hoped that this participant group would illuminate the complexity of the impact of PBIS on students' school experiences and school climate. Additionally, this homogeneous sampling convened a group of research participants who were familiar with PBIS and were able to discuss their experiences with it.

During the 2020-2021 school year, state and local educational leaders grappled with school reopening plans following several months of school closures and distance learning due to COVID-19. City School experienced a successful transition to distance learning in the spring of

2020. Based on research restrictions, all data collection took place virtually. City School's eighth graders were comfortable with the following virtual platforms that were utilized to conduct individual interviews. Recent research points to Zoom as an effective and acceptable method for data collection due to its low cost, user-friendly interface, and security features (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, & Lawless, 2019). Outreach and data collection took place through virtual and physically distanced methods.

The researcher intended to include at least ten, but no more than 12, participants, dependent upon parental consent and individual student's willingness to participate. If up to 12 students provided necessary consent forms and assent, all students would be interviewed. As completed consent and assent forms were returned, the researcher numbered participants by the order in which their forms were received. If more than 12 students provided necessary consent forms, the researcher would interview the first 12 students to return completed consent and assent forms. Ultimately, 10 participants were interviewed for this study. Reaching a point of data saturation would signal an end to data collection. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe this occurrence as the point at which no novel insights are being uncovered and similar responses are received. The researcher was mindful of reaching data saturation as the data collection process progressed. Data saturation was an important consideration within a research study; however, considering the relatively small number of research participants and the potential of unique perspectives to be shared within each interview, the researcher conducted all scheduled interviews.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

This study used individual interviews as its overall strategy for data collection. Permission to conduct this research study at City School was requested and granted. A letter

granting permission and signed by the school's Founder/Executive Director was granted. All eighth graders at City School were invited to participate. The researcher provided detailed information on the research study to potential participants and their guardians. This was done through information sessions, letters, and phone calls. Guardians were required to sign a consent form for their child to participate. Letters, consent forms, and other information were provided in English and Spanish, the native language of many students' families. City School requires that all correspondence to families be disseminated in English and Spanish. A school employee translated written documents and provided interpretation for Spanish-speaking families who had specific questions. Assurances on protection of participant identity were provided. Participation in the research study was voluntary.

The researcher worked with the middle school principal to schedule interview times that did not interfere with students' academic schedules. These interviews were scheduled during lunch, study halls, or before or after school. Interviews were conducted through Zoom due to COVID-19. The individual interviews were estimated to last 30-45 minutes. During the interviews, the researcher took notes and recorded the interview. The interviews were recorded through Zoom.

Individual Interviews

Data was collected through semi structured, individual interviews (Appendix A). Individual interviews are a valid method of collecting qualitative data as they can reveal rich descriptions of participants' experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This study included 10 individual interviews. Purposeful, homogeneous, sampling was employed, as it ensured that the research participants were those who knew a great deal about the topic (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). All eighth-grade students were invited to participate. The researcher scheduled interviews as students provided written parental consent and assent forms.

The purpose of each individual interview was to capture a student's experience with PBIS. A semi structured interview format allowed for a deeper conversation with one student on the focused topic of PBIS. An interview guide included five open-ended questions and a list of helpful clarifying and elaborating probes to elicit additional information from interviewees. A written copy of the open-ended interview questions was provided to each participant at the time of the interview.

The open-ended interview questions (Appendix A) were grounded in the study's conceptual framework to the understand students' perspectives of the impact of PBIS. Question one allowed participants the opportunity to reflect on how student behavior is managed at school. The researcher used the term PBIS and provided an explanation. The researcher looked for participants to explain the tenets of PBIS, including but not limited to clear expectations, consequences for negative behaviors, and positive reinforcement (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Kincaid et al, 2105). This showed a connection between PBIS practices and student behavior. Questions two and four situated student behavior within EST to understand all factors that students believed impacted their behavior. Bronfenbrenner (1977) explained the importance of looking at the environment when attempting to understand human behavior. These questions allowed participants to identify any systems, practices, or factors, including but not limited to PBIS, that influenced their behavior. Question three allowed participants to describe any changes in their behavior since enrolling at City School. Responses helped identify PBIS components and other factors that impacted student behavior, which connected to the importance of understanding the context within which human behavior occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Rudasill et al., 2018).

Question five was designed to identify connections between PBIS and school climate and student outcomes, as perceived by the research participants. The five main questions, along with accompanying subtopics, provided the context for data collection focused on understanding the goals of PBIS, its impact on school climate, and the number of systems and factors that influence student behavior and outcomes.

Data Analysis

All data collected through this research study was analyzed carefully through a structured process of coding. The researcher conducted ten interviews. This yielded a large amount of data to organize and sort to effectively analyze and interpret. The purpose of this qualitative data analysis was to interpret and describe participants' perspectives (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Several authors explain different analytic approaches, and all agree that oftentimes a blend of approaches is most useful in a complete qualitative data analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). Overall, the coding process followed the constant comparison method, which means that the researcher continuously compared pieces of data to identify similarities and differences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This process aided the researcher in developing a set of emergent codes, or themes, from the data set (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2015). The themes that arose from the data revealed major ideas and concepts, which guided the researcher's interpretation (Creswell, 2016). The researcher first coded each interview transcript. Then, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was used to organize interview quotes and codes. This allowed the researcher to sort by interview transcript and themes. The researcher used a color-coding system to provide a visual for emerging themes. The relative length of each theme aided in revealing major ideas and concepts. The process of coding kept the collected data organized and provided a systematic method for analysis.

The researcher followed the structure for interpretive phenomenological analysis detailed by Smith et al. (2009). This process followed these steps: 1) read and re-read transcripts, 2) initial annotation, 3) develop set of emergent themes, 4) identify connections across themes, 5) repeat for all transcripts, and 6) identify patterns across transcripts (Smith et al., 2009). Coding was conducted manually. The goals of this data analysis were to gain a deep understanding of each transcript and participants' perspectives, record researcher's initial observations and recollections, categorize and sort the data, and develop a set of themes that can inform the study's findings.

Limitations of the Research Design

Limitations of this study included the small research sample and participation in individual interviews. Phenomenological studies can focus on a very small sample; however, this can be viewed as a limitation when considering transferability. Data was collected from a homogeneous sample at one research site. It would be difficult to expect that data from this study would produce findings that would be readily generalizable; though the data and research findings are descriptive and detailed enough to lead to further research and consideration within other contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Careful planning for individual interviews increased the comfort levels of the research participants. Interview questions were designed to be easily comprehended by all participants. A familiar and comfortable setting was chosen within the school building. During the individual interviews, the researcher was mindful of their own body language and refrained from any signals that would indicate agreement or disagreement with a participants' response. The researcher hoped that the advantages outweighed potential limitations. These limitations likely did not interfere with the research methods or trustworthiness of the study.

The researcher took steps to ensure that the research and its findings were credible. All data is presented, including data that may conflict and differing perspectives on the topic. The researcher engaged in member checks to ensure that findings are accurate and data collection is valid. Member checking aided in validating the accuracy of the researcher's findings (Creswell, 2015). All participants were asked to review summaries of findings and descriptions of themes and patterns. Member checking was conducted through an interview format to answer the following question: Did I, the researcher, understand this correctly? The researcher conducted member checks throughout data collection and interpretation processes with individual participants as necessary. Additionally, the researcher used a "peer debriefing" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016) strategy with an objective colleague. Peer debriefing allowed the researcher to engage in dialogue about assumptions within the data or findings, which led to uncovering new evidence and/or different ways of examining the data. These steps guided the research process in a manner that safeguarded credibility.

Efforts towards reducing bias were made throughout this research study. The researcher conducted research within their own organization. Deliberate steps were taken to ensure neutrality and acknowledge possible bias. Member checking and peer debriefing were two methods for ensure validity within collected data. Additionally, the researcher implemented reflexive practices to bring awareness to bias and its effect on the research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Reflexive practices help to examine the researcher's role in each step of the study and consider how that can impact the results (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The researcher implemented reflexivity by keeping a journal during the phases of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This journal recorded the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and assumptions throughout the research process, bringing potential issues related to bias to the surface. The

journal also promoted transparency in the process by providing a method for tracking decisions and dilemmas related to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Conclusion

Understanding the connection between PBIS and school climate is essential for educational leaders. To illuminate the perspectives of middle school students on PBIS and its effect on school climate, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted. This study described and interpreted the experiences of 10 middle school students based on their responses to individual interview questions. Their responses revealed important findings, which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand the influence of PBIS on student behavior and school climate through an exploration of the middle school student experience. Ten participants in this study were middle school students in the final semester of their eighth-grade year. All participants attended the same middle school since sixth grade. This middle school implemented PBIS as its school-wide behavior management framework. This chapter presents the data collected and interpreted because of this study. The findings have been organized into themes and subthemes, which were developed during data analysis. A review of the research methodology utilized is also presented.

Brief Review of Methodology

The data in this qualitative phenomenological study was collected through individual interviews. The study employed a phenomenological research design to describe and interpret the experiences of middle school students who had firsthand knowledge of PBIS implementation.

Ten individual interviews were conducted. At the end of the recruitment period, the researcher had received consent and assent forms from 10 students. All 10 students were interviewed as part of this study. Each participant was asked the same five open-ended questions. Questions focused on student behavior, influences on behavior, perspectives on school climate, and impact of school climate on school experience. All interviews were conducted virtually. Written copies of the interview questions were provided to each participant. Member-checking was offered to each participant when transcripts were complete. Individual interviews yielded a large amount of data.

A structured coding process organized the data and aided in data analysis. Five themes emerged: *Peers, Teachers, School Climate, PBIS,* and *Family and Future*. Subthemes were identified within each theme. The subthemes identified within the Peers theme were: *Influence on student behavior, Getting along with classmates,* and *Effect on school climate*. The subthemes identified within the Teachers theme were: *Managing student behavior, Instruction,* and *Influence on school experience*. The subthemes identified within the School Climate theme were: O*bservations* and *Impact on school experience*. The subthemes identified within the PBIS theme were: *Changing behavior, Recognition and consequences,* and O*bservations of universal practices*. There were no subthemes identified within the Family and Future theme. The following section includes an overview of the method used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative data analysis was to describe and interpret participants' perspectives. Through a manual coding process, the researcher became increasingly familiar with each interview transcript and the emerging themes within the data set. The researcher followed the constant comparison method for coding, which assisted in developing the set of codes and emergent themes. The subsections that follow outline the process for coding, organization, and interpretation that was employed.

Coding

Interview transcripts were converted in Microsoft Word files. Individual pieces of data were coded and copied into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The ecological systems theory (EST) was applied to guide the process of data analysis. A first round of coding was completed with a focus on process coding. A second round of coding was conducted using focused coding. This multi-step process led to the development of a set of themes and subthemes.

Organization

After coding each transcript, data and corresponding codes were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This allowed the researcher to see each piece of data and its corresponding code(s). The spreadsheet's sorting feature provided information on frequency of codes. The sorting feature also allowed for the data to be presented in a logical manner by themes and subthemes.

Interpretation

Ecological systems theory (EST) was used as a foundation for interpreting the data. Specifically, the systems view of school climate (SVSC) focused the process of interpretation on school climate at the various systems that can have an influence. EST is a framework for understanding school as a microsystem, among others, that facilitates experiences and opportunities for growth and development through personal interactions with systems that impact individuals (Bronfenbenner, 1977). With EST and SVSC as a guide, data were interpreted based on possible systems of influence. This allowed the researcher to identify various factors impacting school climate and students' school experience, including PBIS. In addition to PBIS, peers, teachers, family, and future goals were also identified as systems of influence. Some of these systems are internal within the school microsystem, while others are external. Not surprisingly, the data and interpretation revealed a complex interconnectedness between systems.

Results

The following sections offer the findings from this research study. The sections are arranged by the major themes: *Peers, Teachers, School Climate, PBIS,* and *Family and Future*. The data presented within each theme are organized by the subthemes listed above. Participants

are named Student 1 through Student 10, with no references to names or other identifying information.

<div align="center">**Peers**</div>

Each participant discussed the influence their peers have on their school experience. This influence affected their own behavior both positively and negatively. Four participants highlighted how important the relationships with their classmates are to their overall school experience and performance. Additionally, several participants made a connection between other students' behavior and the school climate. The effects that peers have on individual students' school experience are discussed in the following sections.

Peers–Influence on Student Behavior

In middle school, peers have a significant influence on one's experience. The data revealed the degree of influence peers have on individual students' behavior. Participants discussed the overall influence their peers have on their behavior, as well as specific instances in which they felt influenced by their peers. Several participants described this influence as positive overall, however, others felt their peers had a negative influence on their behavior at times.

Five participants discussed the overall influence of their peers when asked what factors influenced their behavior. Students 9 and 10 immediately responded to this question with answers that included their friends. Student 9 stated, "My friends and family, in a good way." Student 10 declared, "I think my friends have the most influence on my behavior." Student 9 went on to describe the encouragement they receive from their peers, stating, "Sometimes when I'm not on track or I'm talking, they tell me to be quiet or to pay attention." Student 5 also discussed how their peers influence their behavior by explaining that their friends' moods impact their own, which reflects in their behavior. Student 3 echoed this sentiment. They explained how

they alter their behavior depending on their friends' moods. They stated, "…maybe I shouldn't be so energetic because they're already in a bad mood, I don't want to make it worse." Student 2 summed up the positive and negative effect peers can have their behavior. They stated:

> Being around with friends, good friends who support you and sometimes being around others that don't. They bring you down instead of bringing you up, because then they're not supporting the stuff are you doing well. They're not supporting who you are in general.

Several students recalled instances in which their behavior was negatively influenced by their peers. For example, Student 6, Student 8, and Student 10 noted that their peers oftentimes caused them to be off task during class time. Students were able to identify this behavior and recognized consequences they received. Student 6 said:

> And people say something, like a joke out loud. Then you laugh, and then you get influenced by what other people are doing, of course. And I guess I got influenced once by that, and a teacher checked in with me.

Similarly, Student 10 acknowledged the negative side of peer influence by saying, "But sometimes they would also get me off track, and that's the bad part about it."

Two students recognized an overall negative pattern of behavior that they attributed to peer influences. These responses differed from other participants who mostly recalled isolated incidents. Student 6, in addition to recalling an isolated classroom incident, discussed a period of time in which their behavior resulted in consequences at school. Student 6 said:

> I used to be pretty quiet. But in terms of behavior, I think it changed me a lot because in sixth grade, I barely got any 30-minute lunch reflections. It was only that friend, the

friendship that I had that got me in trouble. It was because of friends. And I think I

learned something from it, definitely.

Student 8 described their behavior at a previous school:

My behavior was influenced really easily. I had good grades. I was very smart but it's just

my behavior when I'm not in those classes or when I'm at lunch or in any other place, my

behavior would get influenced very easily. I would do stuff that my friends would tell me

to do. I would do crazy stuff. I wasn't the best person that would behave well. And I was

a big instigator. I was not a great person. I got into fights. I got into a lot of stuff.

Fortunately, both students reflected on how their behavior had since changed. Student 6 reported

improved behavior by stating, "And then this year, we have this year also, which I learned from

that mistake. I did, and then, yeah, trying to keep that up every day." Student 8 similarly stated,

"Ever since I came into this school, my behavior has changed for the better."

Peers–Getting Along with Classmates

Some participants reflected on how their school experience was connected to how well

they got along with their classmates. These responses reflected a feeling of comfort in their

school environment based on their relationships with their classmates. Student 1 explained that

they were at their best "when I'm having a really nice time with other students, I'm getting along

with my classmates very well." When asked about what influences their behavior most, Student

1 went on to say, "What influences my behavior the most is getting along my classmates very

well…enjoying my time with my classmates and my peers. It's me enjoying my middle school

experience." Student 6 and Student 7 agreed that positive interactions with their peers improved

their behavior and positive feelings towards school. Both students mentioned opportunities for

informal social interactions with friends. Student 6 said, "Having the opportunity to have social

interactions with your friends, I would say." Similarly, Student 7 said, "And I get to see my friends, talk to them…And it's just, I love it." Conversely, Student 1 described their feelings in a classroom where their classmates were not getting along, "I feel like the environment, changes depending on. I happen to feel like it's universally negative at times because of the way the students interact with each other."

Two students highlighted their experience getting to know their classmates over time. Both students felt that this had a positive overall effect. Student 1 said:

My behavior has changed a lot since I came to [this school]. I think it's because I've gotten the chance to know my classmates and school and schoolmates a lot a lot better over time and I have, and I have done better at school, and I worked hard at school to help with this positive change in behavior.

Student 3 agreed, stating:

Some of these students I've known for like 10 years already, since my first year coming into school, you feel like they're more of your family than your actual family because you spent so much time with them in and out of school. So I think that's the main reason why I changed.

Considering the influence peers have in middle school, these responses highlight the importance of getting to know other students. In this school setting, students are likely referring to their grade level cohort, which would be a group of 40 students, a relatively small middle school peer group.

Peers–Effect on School Climate

While several participants relayed positive responses regarding their peers influence on their school experience, some participants' responses revealed the negative impact student

behavior can have on school climate. Four participants discussed ways their peers' behavior contributed to a negative environment in the classroom. Student 1 observed that, "Sometimes the students are a little too uncontrollable and a little too unpredictable and manage to be very, very disruptive during the classes." They went on to add, "It can lead to a lot of negative behavior and can lead to a very negative climate inside the school." Student 8 described a similar observation, "sometimes when one student is behaving badly, it has a chain reaction between the other students, so it could just lead to it being complete chaos and just everything falls apart slowly."

Student 2 and Student 7 explained the effect of student behavior on the classroom environment by describing the way they have felt. Student 2 said, "Sometimes students talk to a teacher, like the students can be like having attitude to the teacher and like the whole class has a bad vibe after that." Like a *vibe*, Student 7 described the *mood* in the classroom, by stating:

> And so, when I'm in school, it's like some kids might be talking. And the teacher may keep giving us multiple redirections. Then tell the whole class something like, "You need to focus more." And that's sort of like a negative thing, you know? So, it's not a good mood.

These descriptions of the *mood* and *vibe* in the classroom help to explain the influence peer behavior has on school climate.

Teachers

All 10 participants named their teachers as a major influence on their school experience. Teachers play a dynamic role in the educational experience of their students. Their influence ranges from instruction to behavior management to their relationships with their students. Participants reported that teachers directly impacted their behavior and the behavior of their peers.

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Teachers–Managing Student Behavior

Participants' responses highlight the impact of student behavior and teachers on school climate. Several participants discussed teachers' responses to student behavior and the impact on their school experience. Five students described their observations of teachers' managing student behavior but did not indicate effectiveness. Student 8 recalled instances where teachers gave *direct orders* and offered rewards for improved student behavior. Student 6 described an experience in which their off-task behavior resulted in a check-in with their teacher. Student 10 stated that they had seen teachers take a student out of class for their behavior. Student 4 and Student 9 agreed, adding that teachers had conversations with students after they gave warnings about their behavior.

Six participants offered what they observed to be effective teacher responses to student behavior. Student 7 appreciated the calm way teachers responded to student behavior, noting positive conversations and redirections. Student 5 explained that students were usually better listeners when teachers offered rewards. Student 7 felt that incentives like school events were an effective way to manage student behavior. Student 2 and Student 3 both agreed that their teachers try to minimize issues with student behavior by having conversations with individual students away from the rest of the class. For example, Student 3 stated, "They try to not make a huge thing. They want it to be private with the student, so it doesn't become a bigger problem than it already is."

Two participants felt that teachers' responses to student behavior were not always effective. Student 1 stated, "Sometimes it's the way [teachers] handle the behavior that's not effective and takes a lot of time and doesn't allow them to get straight to the point that they are trying to in the first place." They provided an example of a teacher attempting to get a group's

attention with a signal, which was only effective for a short time. Student 8 stated that some teachers' approaches to managing behavior were less effective than others.

Teachers–Instruction

The way teachers design instruction has an impact on student outcomes, including student behavior. When asked what influences the school climate or their behavior in class, several participants mentioned the instruction that was provided by teachers. Student 8 and Student 9 felt a positive school climate when they were engaged in exciting lessons. They both agreed that exciting lessons included engaged students who asked questions. Student 9 added that working in groups also made them feel a positive classroom environment.

Student 2 discussed the importance of a focused lesson. They appreciate "completion, the stuff we're going to do on that day, [students] get like a vision." They felt this could relieve stress that students might be experiencing outside of school. Additionally, Student 2 commented positively on the impact of classroom practice on their own time management and work completion. They stated, "[Teachers] actually have me wanting to organize my time for our work." Student 6 also believed that specific lessons affected their behavior, explaining that certain topics or content that are less preferred can bring down their mood or level of interest.

Teachers Influence on School Climate

According to participants, the behavior and actions of teachers impact the school climate. When asked to describe the school climate, Student 5 said:

> I think it's pretty good. I think teachers do a really good job in trying to boost our mood and coming in with a lot of energy and all that stuff. And not even just our teachers, but staff all around are always in a pretty good mood.

Similarly, Student 4 described their school's staff as "happy," which impacted their experience, including their attendance. Student 4 stated:

> I actually like going to school because then I could see my friends and staff. And if I'm even having a bad day, staff or my friends even make that they better in some type of way. And every staff is happy. They are. And that makes me want to come to school every day.

These participants' responses highlight the role all school staff play in creating a positive school climate. These responses also indicated that the impact teachers had on the school climate led to increased feelings of comfort in school.

Student 2 and Student 4 discussed the unseen actions and lives of their teachers, acknowledging their contributions to a positive school climate. Student 2 observed the hard work that teachers put into their lesson planning and school events, saying teachers "are just trying to make us have a great year." Student 4 recognized that their teachers may be dealing with personal issues outside of school but will always project a positive attitude with their students. They stated:

> All the staff are always happy. Even though stuff could happen in their life, I see that they always try to be positive, and they always have a smile on their face. And in the mornings, they always say, "Good morning," or "Hi, how are you doing?" and they make conversation with you.

Both Student 2 and Student 4 highlighted the positive impact their teachers and all school staff had on the school climate.

Student 10 was the only participant to specifically describe the way a teacher's demeanor can negatively affect the school environment. When asked to describe their school's overall

climate, Student 10 focused on how a classroom feels when a teacher is "having a bad day." They observed a decrease in a teacher's patience and an increase in frustration.

Five participants described specific actions teachers and staff take to create a positive school climate. Student 6 observed, "Oh, they always are looking at us, what we're doing. They pay close attention to what we do every day, so I like that." According to most participants, teachers take additional steps to assist students based on those observations. Student 5 said, "Well, when I'm not in a good mood, they would notice that too, and they would try to get my mood up." Student 1 agreed, "I think the teachers are adding to the positive side of the climate, because they will try to ease students." Student 3 added that teachers will inquire about what might be bothering students, even if it is something happening outside of school. Similarly, Student 8 stated, "It's a place where people can feel safe and feel like they can talk about their personal experiences."

Several participants connected the support provided by teachers to student behavior and/or school climate. Four participants commented on the way teachers show care for their students by checking in when they are in a bad mood or displaying negative behavior. For example, Student 3 stated:

> Here they want the student to get help in that sense, like they ask the student if they're okay, if anything's happening at home. So, I think that it does influence knowing that there's people that actually do care. It's not like, "Oh, you're getting in trouble," it's more so like, "You're getting in trouble, but we want to help you fix that, and what can we do to help you?

Student 6 agreed, stating, "They either tell us a redirection and then they tell us, 'Is everything okay? Are you okay? How are you feeling today? Is anything happening at home?' But that's

what I like about them." According to participants, these observations of teacher support

contribute to a positive school climate.

In addition to the examples provided, Student 7 felt that teachers and staff took time to be

sure their approach worked for each student. They provided an instance where a student was

struggling with school attendance. They stated, "They'll try to contact them, tell them, 'Try your

best to come to school. Even if you're late, still try your best to come to school.' They will work

with you and are really nice." Overall, Student 7 appreciated the way all teachers provided

individual students with what they needed. They said, "For the students who need it, they will

work with them differently, because every student is different. And, yeah, they all do it." Finally,

Student 10 described the overall impact of teachers' actions by stating, "You can see how they

care and they love, and they want to see you succeed."

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School Climate

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During the interviews, students answered specific questions about school climate. They

were asked to describe their school's climate and consider factors that influence school climate

both positively and negatively. For most participants, the behavior and actions of themselves and

others greatly impacted the school climate. Participants also explained how the school climate

influenced their school experience.

School Climate–Observations

When asked to describe the climate of their school, all participants' responses included

positive characteristics and observations. Several students, including Student 1, Student 3,

Student 7, and Student 10, used the word positive to describe their school's climate. Specifically,

school climate was most referred to as supportive. For example, Student 2 described their

school's climate as a different type of environment "where the teachers come here to support

their students and we support them as teachers." They also described a particular experience when they felt a positive school climate in their classroom, "It was all happy and energetic with people working, yet you might have small conversations, but we get right back into our work and you just like the work and help other students." Student 9 also highlighted the helpfulness they observed between their classmates and teachers, which created "a calm, peaceful environment." Similarly, Student 4 and Student 5 noted that the care and concern shown by teachers positively impacts the school climate.

Hard-working and engaged were characteristics that were often used to describe the behavior of others when a positive school climate was observed. Student 2 noted that a positive school climate could be observed when all students are working in their classroom. Student 9 agreed that students' engagement in class resulted in a positive school climate. They observed this when they and their classmates' asked questions. Participants also acknowledged the hard work of their teachers and felt that contributed to a positive school climate as well. Student 2 stated that they knew how hard their teachers worked on lessons and grading. Student 4 and Student 5 recognized how engaged their teachers were. Student 4 observed teachers and staff who were happy to be in school, while Student 5 observed teachers "coming in with a lot of energy."

Several participants described their school's climate as safe. For example, when asked to describe their school's climate, Student 2 used the words *fun* and *safe*. Similarly, Student 6 stated, "It's good. I think it's nice. It doesn't feel bad in any way. It feels like you're safe." Like Student 6, many students discussed school climate about how they felt in school. For example, Student 8 said:

I would say it's pretty good. Just that warm, comforting feeling because the teachers care

a lot about the students and the students are usually behaving very well. So, from my

experience, I would say the environment is a very-- it's a good place to be at when you're

in the moment. This is somewhere where you can feel safe.

Student 8 provides a description of a safe school climate that has resulted from teachers showing

care for their students.

Though most participants expressed an overall positive view of their school's climate,

one interview question asked them to consider factors that could create a negative school

climate. Three students discussed the negative effect of student misbehavior and poor classroom

management. For example, Student 1 stated:

I suppose it has to do with student behavior in a way. When some students act negatively

or are negative it can affect the environment at the school and give you a negative

climate, which sometimes again with the behavior management some students act

negatively, and the teachers aren't as effective.

Student 5 named specific behaviors they observe in classes that can contribute to a negative

school climate. They said, "When students are not listening, and when work is not getting done,

and teachers are giving a lot of redirections." Student 8 agreed, describing a lack of behavior

management in their previous school, which led to a negative school climate. They observed,

"And while some schools manage behavior well, others do not."

Two participants believed that school climate changes depending upon the context.

Student 1 felt that the overall school climate could be positive, but in certain moments or certain

classes it could feel negative. They stated, "Sometimes the climate can feel positive but during

class it can feel a little negative, at times, because the students get a little negative with each

other." Student 4 agreed that student interactions and behavior can differ depending upon the setting. They said, "I think it changes sometimes because while you're in class, you could be a different person in the hallways. With friends, you could be another person."

School Climate–Impact on School Experience

The school climate as participants described it – positive, supportive, and safe – had an impact on their overall school experience. Three students discussed the impact this has had on their school attendance. For example, Student 4 stated:

> Other people say that they don't like school, but I'm a very different person. I actually like going to school because then I could see my friends and staff. And if I'm even having a bad day, staff or my friends even make that day better in some type of way. And every staff is happy. They are, and that makes me want to come to school every day.

Student 7 and Student 8 gave similar responses. Student 8 explained that their attendance improved from sixth to eighth grade.

For one participant, positive school climate was connected to social-emotional well-being. Student 2 felt that a positive school climate could provide *a relaxing day* for students who might feel stress outside of school. For Student 2, a positive school climate impacted their school experience *in a good way*. They stated, "We have each other to boost up our feelings like have confidence in ourselves and our goals and plans for future with all those positive vibes around us."

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support

As part of the interview process, participants were asked to describe how teachers and staff manage student behavior and if their behavior had changed since entering their current school. Participants were also asked if their school's behavior system (PBIS) had influenced their

school performance. As a result, participants discussed short-term and long-term changes in their behavior, methods that were implemented to manage student behavior, and practices that they viewed as universal in their school.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support–Changing Behavior

All participants agreed that their behavior had changed since entering their current school. Most described long-term, overall changes in their behavior, while two focused on short-term, specific changes. Both Student 4 and Student 3 relayed changes in their behavior related to classroom management practices. Student 4 noted a change in their work completion. They stated:

> Yeah, I try to finish my work on time. So, then we if we have a reward for people who finished their work on time and once, I didn't have my work done. I think about that time. And if I can't finish it, I'll try to finish it after school.

Student 3 also explained that their classroom behavior had changed because of teachers' redirections. They felt this led them to improve their behavior to avoid consequences in class and at home.

Most participants' responses expressed overall changes in their behavior. Several students noticed a change in their comfort level in school and with those around them. This led them to open up and express themselves more freely. Student 4 stated, "I remember in the beginning of sixth grade, I used to be super shy. And then I came out of my comfort zone little by little, and now I talk to more people like friends or the staff." They acknowledged that rewards and incentives encouraged this behavior change. Student 5 and Student 1 also noted an increased sense of comfort. For example, Student 5 stated, "I think I just got more comfortable

here…and I could be more myself. So, it's nice." Student 1 agreed, recalling that their behavior changed as they got to know the school and their classmates better.

Student 8 reported that their behavior in school had never been an issue, but also felt that it had improved since attending their current school. They stated:

> I guess how this school is a lot more strict compared to [my previous school] and the other schools that I've been in. This one is a lot more strict so it made me behave a lot better and just up my game a little bit.

Student 3 expressed a similar feeling:

> I think it has a lot in general, not in a bad way at all. I think I've always stayed a good standing student, but I feel like it changed in the sense that I want to help the people that are having trouble because, in the beginning of the year, it's like I really didn't care if they got in trouble or not. But now that we've been with them for so long, we tend to check in more and be like, "Oh, we shouldn't do this. We know we would get in trouble," and I think that's how my behavior changed.

Other participants also reported an improvement in their behavior. Student 9 said, "I used to get in trouble a lot, but I don't get in trouble as much anymore because I don't want to have the attention, like discipline at the school." Student 10 reported improved behavior overall, even with a difficult seventh-grade year, saying:

> I think when I first started in sixth grade, that my behavior was awesome, on point. And then it slowly started going up. I kept doing good. And then when seventh grade hit, that's when I started going downhill. And then eighth grade, right now, it's going up. It's really good.

Most participants noted a change in their behavior that resulted in improved school performance. Both Student 1 and Student 7 reported an improvement in school attendance since attending their current school. In addition, Student 2 explained that their level of work completion had improved during their time at this school. They said, "At my old school I used to not turn my work in on time. I was like I hope [this] school changes me…and they actually have me wanting to organize my time for our work." Student 8 also reported improved academic performance, stating:

And ever since I came into this school, my behavior has changed for the better. I became a lot quieter, but I'm also keeping up those grades and I'm also still having a fun time with my friends. I'm also still being funny, joking around, and all of that. So, I managed to change myself for the better and have fun while also keeping up my grades.

Though not directly related to academic performance, Student 2 also observed an improvement in their attitude towards school.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support–Recognition and Consequences

A key component of PBIS is a system for recognition and consequences. Many students acknowledged this practice when asked to describe how teachers and staff managed behavior at their school and how the behavior system influenced their school performance. Nine of the participants identified some type of school-based recognition or consequence.

Five participants identified recognition in the form of rewards given by teachers or staff when they displayed positive behavior. According to participants, these were given as whole group and individual rewards. Student 8 experienced classes in which teachers offered a reward for behavior like staying quiet or seated. They stated, "perhaps even giving award at the end, like maybe if they stay quiet, they could get some sort of reward like going outside or getting some

relaxing time." Both Student 3 and Student 4 recalled teachers offering rewards for completing assigned work on time. Student 3 identified snacks as a specific reward. Student 10 discussed a school-wide system in which students could earn prizes for displaying positive behavior. They felt this was "somewhat" effective in managing behavior. Student 5 described these types of rewards as "bribing". Student 8 felt more positively about the school's reward system, stating, "I think the reward system definitely made me reassure myself and make me feel like I need to stop or something like that. Like I need to get everything together and just focus on what I'm doing."

Five participants highlighted fewer tangible forms of recognition, which all felt were the result of sustained positive behavior and hard work. Student 2 appreciated recognition in the form of Student of the Month awards. They stated, "Recognize me about some positives, shout outs, and like to recognize like my behavior and my good work I have done during the month." Student 7 and Student 9 agreed that these awards are effective at managing student behavior. Student 7 stated:

> Yeah, those things help. If you want Student of the Month, you've got to listen, do what you're supposed to do, do your work, be on time. So, for the students that want it, [they] will try their best to try to earn it.

Student 9 said, "When I get an award or something, like a certificate, it motivates me to try to get another one." Student 2 explained that they were motivated to earn recognition as part of the National Junior Honor Society, stating, "One day was when they were talking about the National [Junior] Honor Society. So, I wanted to get that and then I did. I was trying my best." Student 10 was motivated to earn a middle school diploma. They said:

> I think this year it influenced me a lot because I want to graduate, and I was struggling a lot. And graduation is a big deal. And obviously, I want to graduate. So, I'm going to do

whatever it takes to graduate. So, I had to change up my behavior so I can graduate. I just had to.

Finally, Student 3 felt that they were motivated to improve their behavior when their peers were recognized for positive behavior.

Six participants discussed different types of consequences administered as part of their school's behavior system, as well as their impact on students' school experiences. When asked how their school's behavior system affected their school experience, Student 6 stated, "It does give you the feeling of 'If you do this, you're going to have to pay.' Not pay actual money, but pay for your consequences for your action." Student 4 agreed and felt consequences were effective in promoting positive behavior. They said, "But if you act badly towards other people, then you get a 30-minute detention and…it tells you, oh, you shouldn't do that again, and you know not to do it another time." Student 7 and Student 9 felt that the school's behavior system impacted student behavior because they wanted to avoid consequences like staying after school or losing privileges. For example, Student 7 recalled a time when they were not allowed to attend a field trip to a theme park due to their behavior. They reflected, "Sometimes it can make you sad and you regret your decisions." Student 10 discussed a similar consequence, saying, "They would host fun events. So, when students don't behave, they can't participate. So, that makes the student want to strive and have positive behavior so they can go to those fun events." Student 3 discussed the feeling of receiving consequences. They explained:

I think socially it makes us feel bad, getting in trouble or causing a teacher to feel bad or feel sad, it makes us feel bad… You feel like you did something wrong, knowing you did something wrong, and you tend to try to fix it.

Student 10 was the only participant to discuss a time when consequences had a negative effect on their behavior. They said:

> In sixth grade I just felt like teachers were bossing me around. And then in seventh grade, I didn't want to let them. And I think that's when it started going downhill. I just didn't want to be told what to do no more.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support–Observations of Universal Practices

When asked to describe universal practices for managing student behavior, most participants cited practices that they observed in response to negative student behavior. Student 1 and Student 5 described a universal attention signal. According to Student 1, "All the teachers, most of the teachers, when the students get too noisy or too loud or cause too much disruption, they just quiet them down. For example, signs up." Five participants explained that teachers used warnings to address unwanted student behavior. For example, Student 2 said:

> Oh. Good, through the little warnings about it and to see if, like if they change their behavior and if they don't, like, they like take them outside to have a little talk to us not in front of the whole class.

Student 3 described a similar practice, but also observed where teachers' practice began to differ:

> They usually give, like other schools do, the three warnings and then after, on that third one, is where they get the talk outside or the 'See me after class.' But after that, I think everyone usually might do something different, depending on the teacher.

Student 8 commented on the use of warnings and focused on the positive impact that practice can have, saying:

> I like how they give whole class warnings or just specific warnings to one student. Usually, it's more fair when it's just the student, but at times, it can be the whole class

that's just not behaving. The warning system is very nice because it reassures the student

and the class as a whole, and it gives us a sign that either we should stop or improve.

Student 4 and Student 9 also mentioned warnings as a universal practice. For example, Student 4

observed teachers providing individual students with warnings when their classroom behavior

did not meet expectations. Next, the impact of family and future goals will be discussed.

Family and Future

All participants discussed the impact their families had on their behavior in school.

Specific responses focused on support received at home, avoiding discipline at home, feeling a

sense of responsibility, and wanting to make their families proud. For a couple of participants,

stress at home had an influence on their behavior at school. Some responses also included

discussion of their goals and their families' hopes for their future.

When asked what influenced their behavior at school, five participants discussed the

support they receive from their families. Student 9 said that their behavior was influenced by

their family, specifically their mother, "in a good way." Student 2 and Student 6 both said their

families check in with each other on a daily basis. Student 2 said that when their family checks in

with each other at dinner time it "shows that they care." Student 6 reported that they like giving

their mother good news about their day, stating:

> When we check in, when I check in with my mom, and she says [her day] went good or
>
> like the best. It went great. And my day went great also. So that also makes me feel really
>
> happy to continue moving on.

Student 8 also appreciated check-ins with their mother. They said:

My mom has given me talks before school or anything. Or sometimes, she's like, 'Just do your best. Do what you need to do. I really want you to succeed in life.' So that kind of motivates me a bit.

Student 4 felt that having a good time at home resulted in a good day at school.

Student 2 and Student 8 told of role models within their families. Student 2 said their older sister was a successful student, so that motivated them to meet their goals in school. Student 8 said:

I also see that in my aunts and uncles. I see that they succeeded a lot. They get to do a lot of things and have fun a lot. And I can see that through the hard work that they've done. So, I kind of want to be like them or better.

Student 8 also voiced a desire to make their mom proud. They said:

I guess you could say to represent my family or just make my mom proud because we were, I guess you could say, poor at one time. We were struggling a little bit, not too much, but we were struggling a little bit. So, I want to support my family and I want to do the best I can to just make her proud.

Student 3 expressed a similar sentiment, stating:

Growing up from a Hispanic household, right? We tend to have family members that haven't been to school in a really long time, some don't have like a college degree or diploma, barely their high school. So, us having this opportunity to go to school here, we feel like that's our responsibility to carry that on and to graduate and to make our parents proud, no matter what, it's always the parents that we feel we need to [make] proud.

Two students felt that their behavior at school was mostly good because they wanted to avoid discipline at home. For example, Student 7 said:

Because if I get in trouble at school and I have like an hour, if I did something really bad, then when I go home, my mom is going to be mad, then I'm going to lose my stuff there. So, I get grounded in two places.

Student 10 reported a similar feeling, contributing a change in their behavior to consequences they might receive at home. They said, "Because obviously, you don't want to get in trouble at home. And that's kind of why I changed my behavior at school because if I wasn't going to graduate, I knew I would be in trouble at home."

Two participants felt that their behavior was negatively impacted by stress. Student 1 and Student 5 discussed stress in their home environment. Student 1 stated:

For bad behavior, at home factors, a lot of stress a lot of inefficiency and there's a lot of stress at home, which is a big factor, because it can affect you negatively, which it does and makes me act a little differently in school.

Student 5 reported that their mornings at home influence their mood and behavior at school on a given day. They said, "Just how I start my morning. If I wake up and my siblings are running around and not listening, that's going to obviously get me in a bad mood." Student 6 described the stress that resulted from the high school application process as a factor that influenced their behavior. They stated:

It could be many things, I guess. Yeah. Maybe-- I don't know because I don't really know what could have impacted me that hard. It was maybe waiting for high school. Because high school, they take way too much time to let you know if you got accepted. Maybe I was overthinking a lot, and I needed to, in some way, to get that out. Get all of the pressure out or something.

Seven participants said their positive behavior in school was motivated by their goals, both short-term and long-term. Four participants believed that positive behavior would help them reach academic goals. For example, Student 2 felt that having goals related to work completion and class participation kept them focused in school. Student 4 said their behavior improved when they set out to complete missing work after an absence. They explained:

I was feeling good because I was on task and I was trying to get on my missing work that I had to do, and I just felt like I was getting things organized because I was collecting everything, and I was starting to finish things. And I just felt good about everything, which made my day a lot better.

Student 6 wanted to achieve high grades. They explained that their positive behavior helped them to receive "a 4 on two assignments in one class." They felt this achievement led to continued positive behavior. Finally, Student 8 wanted to perform well on state standardized testing. They noted a positive impact on their behavior in school, stating:

I feel like I was very focused during those times. I really tried my best. Everyone was behaving as they should and doing everything that they can to improve and do their best on that test, and so have I. Throughout my experience, I have behaved exponentially and I have done the best I can. I feel like I really have behaved myself well [and] done well on the test during those weeks.

Another goal, middle school graduation, influenced the behavior of four participants. According to Student 10, graduation "definitely" influenced their behavior. They also said, "I just kept thinking graduation, graduation. I need to graduate. So that really helped me do good in class." Student 9 agreed, stating, "Knowing that this is my last year and I got to behave in order to be able to graduate." Student 7 revealed that graduation motivated them to come to class

regularly, even during distance learning. Student 2 also felt that their middle school behavior was positively influenced by their plans for high school and a career. Similarly, Student 8 stated:

> I would say the future, like to go to a better high school, to go to a college. That's what I'm planning on for my future. So, I try to do the best I can to increase those chances of me going to college and getting my degree and everything.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the impact of PBIS on student behavior and school climate through the perspectives and experiences of middle school students. Ten participants were interviewed as part of this study. During individual interviews, participants responded to questions about their perceptions of PBIS, school climate, and their behavior in school. The participants were all eighth graders who had attended a PBIS school since sixth grade. Through the data analysis process, five distinct themes emerged: *Peers, Teachers, School Climate, PBIS,* and *Family and Future*. In *Peers*, participants discussed the influence other students had on their behavior and the school climate. For many participants, getting along with their classmates was an important factor in their school experience. In *Teachers*, participants described the impact teachers had on their school experience, specifically discussing instruction and how teachers managed student behavior. In *School Climate*, participants provided their observations of their school's climate and identified different factors that influenced the school climate, both positively and negatively. In *PBIS*, participants explained the ways PBIS affected their behavior. Many participants described how their behavior changed for the better because of the school's behavior system. They also discussed the elements of PBIS that had an impact on their behavior, including universal practices in their school. In *Family and Future*, participants explained the ways their families and their goals influenced their behavior in school. Responses

revealed mostly positive effects on student behavior. Chapter Five will provide a discussion of the findings, including interpretation of the data, implications of the study, and recommendations on how the findings can support K-12 school leaders in shaping student behavior that supports a positive school climate.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to examine the effect of PBIS on student behavior and school climate from the perspective of a middle school student. This qualitative study focused on the experience of 10 middle school students. The following research questions served as a guide: Based on students' experiences, what is the impact of PBIS on the middle school climate? What are middle-school students' experiences and perceptions of positive behavior interventions and supports? Based on students' experiences, what element(s) of PBIS positively influence students' behavior and overall school experience? What do middle school students perceive to be the impact of PBIS on overall student outcomes such as attendance and academic performance? The insights provided by the research participants helped to answer these questions.

As school leaders set out to foster positive school climates, they may begin by addressing student behavior through a school-wide system of PBIS. The general approach prescribed by PBIS has been put into practice in many schools across the U.S. (Kincaid et al., 2015; Horner et al., 2014). Several studies have connected PBIS implementation to improved student outcomes in academics and behavior (Nocera, Whitbread, & Nocera, 2014; Bohanon et al., 2018). Additionally, PBIS is seen to have a positive impact on school climate (Voight, 2015). This study sought to investigate the relationship between student perspectives of PBIS and school climate.

To explore this relationship, 10 middle school students were interviewed. These interviews revealed many factors that influence behavior and overall school experience, including school climate. This study intended to examine PBIS as a system that can influence school climate. The theoretical framework for this study, Bronfenbrenner's EST, considers the ways the environment impacts an individual's behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Based on the

EST, the SVSC looks at the impact of internal and/or external systems on school climate (Rudasill, Snyder, Levinson, & Adelson, 2018). This lens helped to integrate and interpret the study's findings.

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach to highlight the experiences of 10 middle school students who had attended a school that implemented PBIS. Their interview responses revealed several factors, including PBIS, that influence student behavior and school climate. Five themes emerged from the data analysis process: Peers, Teachers, PBIS, School Climate, and Family and Future. The following sections will present an interpretation of the findings, as well as describe implications for practice and suggest avenues for further research.

Interpretation of Findings

This section discusses the findings from this study.

Research Question One: Impact of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions on Climate

The first research question – "Based on students' experiences, what is the impact of PBIS on the middle school climate?" – required an examination of students' perspectives on the various components of PBIS and the factors that influence school climate. Two related research questions helped to design a deeper investigation, guide interview questions, and focus the literature review: "What are middle-school students' experience and perceptions of PBIS?" and "Based on students' experiences, what element(s) of PBIS positively influence students' behavior and overall experience?" To gain a complete understanding of students' school experience, the EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and SVSC (Rudasill et al., 2018) was used as a tool for interpretation.

In the subtheme School Climate – Observations, participants made connections between student behavior and school climate. Some observed student behaviors that impacted school climate positively, while others described behavior that impacted school climate negatively. Hard-working, engaged, and kind were behaviors that would have a positive impact on the school climate. Behaviors like talking out of turn, being off task, and having a bad attitude would have a negative effect on the school climate. Previous research has shown that a reduction in problematic student behaviors has improved school climate (Banks & Obiakor, 2015; Bradshaw, 2013). In the current study, participants' perspectives aligned to these previous research findings.

Several interview questions focused on PBIS and its impact on student behavior and overall school experience. All participants agreed that their behavior had changed since attending their current school. These changes were referred to as positive for all participants. Most students described their current school as strict, referencing rules and consequences for negative behavior. This connection aligns to research by Laftman et al. (2017) who found that schools with clear behavioral expectations and consequences saw fewer incidents of negative behavior. Additionally, prior research explained that consistency in rules and expectations decreased negative behaviors (Johnson, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2016). Participants described consequences, like warnings from teachers and after school detention, as universal practices at their school. A consistent approach to managing behavior could be one factor in improved student behavior acknowledged by participants.

A school-wide PBIS approach includes universal components: clear behavioral expectations, consequences and rewards, and individualized interventions. Participants' responses demonstrated an understanding of these components. Participants were able to describe negative behaviors that would be met with consequences and positive behaviors that

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would earn rewards. They also identified several consequences and rewards that were part of classroom and school-wide practice. These included warnings, after school detention, tangible rewards, and school-wide recognition. These responses reflect an understanding of a school-wide system, which is shown to have a positive impact on student outcomes, particularly students of color (Gage et al., 2019). Additionally, prior research indicates that some students may need additional supports within a PBIS system (Kincaid et al., 2015; Lawrence, 2017). Responses from participants in the current study echoed this finding. One participant observed teachers providing individualized supports to students. Another recalled a specific time they needed and were given support with improving their attendance. These findings indicate an understanding of a school-wide system, which has been shown to decrease negative behavior and improve student outcomes.

Understanding the elements of PBIS that influence students' behavior and school experience is another important outcome of this study. In subthemes PBIS – Changing Behavior and PBIS – Recognition and Consequences, participants discussed consequences as a deterrent of negative behavior. Some students noted improvements in their behavior based on their desire to avoid consequences. Almost all students referred to rewards and recognition as motivation to display positive behaviors in school. Some students felt that seeing their peers earn recognition also influenced their behavior positively. The rates of these responses reflect the goal of PBIS, which is to reduce punitive discipline practices and focus on recognizing positive student behavior (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Kincaid et al., 2015). It is important to note the impact of recognition in promoting positive behavior.

As discussed in Chapter Two, an updated definition of PBIS includes relationship-building as a key component of the framework (Kincaid et al., 2015). This was overwhelmingly

supported in the current study's findings. In the subtheme Peers – Getting Along with Classmates, participants discussed how having a positive relationship with their peers influenced their behavior and school experience. Each participant acknowledged that this took time, but positively impacted their behavior. One participant described their classmates as family, explaining that those relationships led to a positive change in their behavior throughout middle school. Another participant felt that as they got to know their classmates their behavior improved, which led them to do better in school.

In addition to relationships with peers, participants' responses highlighted the important role teachers play in students' school experience through their approach to behavior management. Most existing research on teachers and PBIS focuses on teachers' perceptions of PBIS and fidelity of implementation (Gage et al., 2019; Houchens et al., 2017; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2017; Pas et al., 2019). A study by Lawrence (2017) revealed the impact of positive relationships between students and adults in school communities on school climate. Findings of the current study focus on the way students perceive teachers' implementation of PBIS and their overall approach to behavior management. While some participants mentioned incentives and consequences as behavior management methods used by teachers, most participants discussed the support teachers provided while redirecting negative behaviors. Several participants observed teachers checking in with students following incidents of negative behavior. They viewed this as a way for teachers to try to understand what was happening that caused the behavior. Additionally, a participant described the way their teachers managed behavior as *calm.* Another noted that teachers were always paying *close attention* to students' behavior. Many participants felt these practices were effective. In some ways, a teacher's approach may increase effectiveness of PBIS and improve student behavior, while in others, a system like PBIS may

influence a teacher's approach by providing a blueprint for dealing with problematic student behavior.

Prior research and the current study imply that PBIS implementation has a positive influence on school climate (Chitiyo & May, 2018; Houchens et al., 2017; Lawrence, 2017; Voight, 2015). Other studies demonstrate the benefits of PBIS in middle schools (Coyle, 2013; Franks, 2017; Goodman-Scott, Hays, & Cholewa, 2018; Hollingshead et al., 2015). Contradictorily, a study by Ryoo, Hong, Bart, Shin, and Bradshaw (2018) revealed no significant impact of PBIS on middle school outcomes, suggesting further investigation into school characteristics and other school efforts. The findings of the current study agree that there are other factors besides PBIS, both in and out of school, that impact student behavior and school climate, including peers, teachers, family, and goals. This is aligned to research by Ice et al. (2015), which found that there are many influences on school climate. Ultimately, however, most participants identified student behavior, their own and that of their peers, as a major influence on school climate. They also perceived PBIS to be a constructive influence on student behavior when asked how PBIS influenced their behavior. In that way, this study demonstrates the positive impact PBIS has on school climate.

The findings of this study also point to the significant impact that peers, teachers, family, and goals have on student behavior. When asked what influenced their behavior at school, most participants did not say PBIS. For most participants, peers were the major influence on their behavior. Peers in terms of behavior and relationship-building does fall under the PBIS framework. While teachers' approach to behavior management was previously discussed, students were also influenced by teachers' dispositions and instruction. All participants discussed the influence of their families on their school behavior, whether positive or negative. Two

participants identified positive role models in their families, while others mentioned the importance of the support they receive from their mothers. Two participants said they maintain positive behavior because they want to make their families proud. Conversely, two participants felt their behavior at school was negatively by the stress they experienced at home. Seven participants said their behavior at school was influenced by their goals, which included short- and long-term goals. These findings are supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1977) EST, which helps to understand individuals' behavior as it is impacted by the environment in which they function. In this study, the findings suggest that students' behavior, which effects school climate, is influenced by several factors.

Research Question Two: Perception of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions

The second research question – "What do middle school students perceive to be the impact of PBIS on overall student outcomes such as attendance and academic performance?" – was designed to further investigate the specific outcomes that can be influenced by PBIS. Participants were asked: "How does the behavior system influence your overall school performance?" Follow-up prompting specifically asked about attendance, academic performance, and social-emotional well-being.

Participants' responses focused on their academic performance and the impact of PBIS. The findings reflect existing research, which has shown that as disruptive behavior decreases, academic engagement increases (Bunch-Crump & Lo, 2017; Clair et al., 2018; Narhi et al., 2017; Sinclair et al., 2019). Within the current study, one participant said that rewards and incentives help them maintain focus and stay on task. Another participant said that school-wide recognition like Student of the Month motivates them to complete their work. Similarly, another participant

discussed how PBIS has changed their behavior, highlighting their work completion as an accomplishment.

Two participants shared that their school attendance was positively influenced by PBIS. One participant elaborated, explaining that a potential loss of privileges motivated them to come to school on time, which was a change in behavior because of school staff intervention. This participant's experience is an example of the tiered supports within the PBIS framework. While PBIS practices like clear expectations connected to rewards and consequences will work for most students, some will need additional supports to meet those expectations (Sugai & Horner, 2020).

One participant recalled how shy they were at the start of middle school. They felt that PBIS encouraged them to participate more in class. They enjoyed the recognition they received from teachers, which motivated them to continue participating. Like studies by Narhi et al. (2017) and Wills et al. (2019), PBIS influenced this student's classroom behavior through some of the framework's components: recognition and positive reinforcement.

Implications

This study employed the EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and the SVSC (Rudasill et al., 2018) to understand the impact of PBIS on school climate based on the experiences of middle school students. The overall findings of the study continued to confirm that PBIS positively impacts school climate by promoting positive student behavior. However, participants indicated several factors that influence their behavior in addition to PBIS. The EST asserts that the behavior of an individual cannot be understood without consideration of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In the context of this study, a middle school student's environment includes the influence of their peers, their teachers' behavior, classroom instruction, behavior

management (PBIS), their families, and their own goals. As participants revealed, student behavior has a major influence on school climate. Consequently, all factors that affect student behavior also affect school climate.

PBIS is defined as a framework for managing student behavior at the school, classroom, and individual student levels. As a framework it must be implemented as such. Additionally, the definition has been updated to include relationship-building as a component of the framework (Kincaid et al., 2015). The impact of participants' peers and teachers on student behavior is highlighted within this study's findings. PBIS cannot be implemented as a one-size-fits-all process. The framework includes tiers to provide supports for students in need. Moreover, school-wide PBIS implementation must also focus on relationship-building. The results from this study show that relationships between students and their peers and students and their teachers are equally as influential in shaping behaviors as rewards and consequences.

Research shows that student voice has become more of a focus in education and educational research over the last three decades (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). The student voices captured in this study provided valuable insights into PBIS and school climate. Phenomenological studies such as this give researchers and educators a glimpse into the experience of a student and allow for students' perspectives to be emphasized. Participants' responses were articulate and thoughtful, which aligns to existing research on student voice (Kane & Chimwaynge, 2014; Pazey & DeMatthews, 2019). The current study depended upon student voice to offer firsthand experience of a phenomenon as the most important stakeholder in education.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings from this study continue to reinforce for school leaders the importance of fostering a positive school climate. PBIS is an evidence-based approach to managing student behavior that positively influences school climate, as confirmed by students' perspectives at the heart of this study. School leaders should continue to develop PBIS implementation in their schools. Relationship-building must be a key component of PBIS, as it has proven to be a crucial part of students' school experience. School leaders must continue to support teachers in their PBIS implementation, including coaching and collaboration with peers. To gain insights into implementation success, developing methods for engaging students in dialogue will allow school leaders to identify school-wide strengths and needs. Finally, school leaders must remember that school climate is influenced by several systems, including philosophies, practices, and policies. These systems must be aligned to maximize the impact on school climate and student outcomes.

Additionally, families play a significant role in shaping their child's behavior both at home and in school. The findings of this study show the positive influence families have through their support, example, expectations, and accountability. The findings also reveal that not all families always provide a positive influence. School and community leaders should continue to engage families in the school community through workshops that can help families support each other. Workshops can focus on parenting skills, dilemmas faced by parents of adolescents, and stress reduction for adults and children. Helping families navigate obstacles like unemployment, housing, and food insecurity is another way school and community leaders can support families so they can support their children in the most positive ways possible.

Finally, the study's findings revealed the positive impact of short- and long-term goals on students' behavior. Participants in the current study were motivated by short-term incentives like

a walk when classwork was completed. Others were motivated to earn school-wide recognition like Student of the Month awards. Still others were motivated by graduation, college acceptance, and future jobs. Educators should continue to promote goal setting within classes for groups and individual students. Students should be encouraged to set short- and long-term goals and revisit them often. Educators can help by helping students track goals, establishing action steps, and celebrating victories.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings from this study, the following are recommendations for future research:

- The study's findings could be strengthened if combined with quantitative research. A survey administered to participants may be able to capture additional information related to ranking the influence of various factors on student behavior or school climate.

- Studies of targeted populations could add to the findings of this study. For example, a study of only Latino students' perspectives or only African American students' perspectives may provide insights into disproportionality of discipline.

- A study of students receiving different levels of PBIS supports may provide information helpful to educators implementing PBIS and designing interventions.

- A qualitative study that examined other school-wide systems and practices like social-emotional learning or standards-based grading would strengthen conclusions made within this study based on EST and SVSC.

Conclusion

In kindergarten through 12 schools, PBIS is often correlated to school climate based on school discipline data and measures of school climate. This qualitative phenomenological study sought to examine this correlation from the perspectives of eighth-grade students. Prior research left the student perspective unexplored. The study's findings related to the importance of relationship-building as a key component of PBIS can contribute to successful implementation and student outcomes. Additionally, the findings that support existing research continue to show the value of PBIS as a tool for managing student behavior in schools. The importance of student voice in educational research is also emphasized in this study.

School leaders must continue to build positive school climates within their school communities. PBIS is just one system within a school that impacts school climate. Managing all systems with a goal of alignment is crucial to maximizing positive student outcomes. Another significant finding within this study is the student perspective on the many factors that influence student behavior, which in turn influences school climate. Engaging families as a system of external influence on school behavior is another strategy recommended to school leaders. The importance of helping students set and reach goals is a key recommendation within this study. All of these factors, including PBIS, work together to shape student behavior and influence school climate, improving outcomes for all students.

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Interview Guide

Researcher: *Thank you for taking time to talk to me today. As you know, I am currently conducting research for a doctoral dissertation. The main goal of my study is to understand the perspectives of students related to PBIS, the school's system for behavior management, and how it effects school climate. I hope this interview feels like a comfortable conversation. All of your responses will be kept confidential. Please feel free to share any information including specific experiences or feelings on the topic. You will be given the opportunity to review the interview transcript, and I may reach out with clarifying questions later on to be sure I am describing and interpreting your experience accurately. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Main Question	Subtopics
1. Can you explain how your teachers and other staff members manage student behavior?	a. Can you describe any universal practices for managing student behavior? b. Can you tell me about a specific time when PBIS influenced your behavior?
2. What influences your behavior at school?	a. Can you tell me about a time when you felt you were at your best at school? b. School factors? c. Home factors? d. What has the most influence? Least?
3. Has your behavior changed since you enrolled at this school?	a. What do you think caused this change? b. If it has not changed, why not?
4. How would you describe the overall climate of your school?	a. When you feel the climate is positive, what does your classroom feel like? Negative? b. Is the climate universal throughout the school? If not, what causes that?
5. Can you tell me how the school's behavior system influences your school experience?	a. What factors influence your attendance? b. What factors influence your academic performance? c. What factors influence your social-emotional well-being?