

**Elementary School Personnel's Perspectives on School Suspensions:
A Basic Qualitative Study**

by

Dedra Anita Baskin

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A Basic Qualitative Study

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Dedra Anita Baskin

Approved by:

Dissertation Chair: Cathy McKay, Ed.D.

Committee Member: Susan Sutton, Ph.D.

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Dedication

This project and the completion of this journey are dedicated to my late parents, Mrs. Lettie Baskin (2015) and Mr. Chover Baskin (2021).

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge, my creator, all of my family, friends, and educators who helped me in achieving my goal of fulfilling another degree in the field of education. A special thanks to Dr. Cathy McKay, chairperson, and Dr. Susan Sutton, committee member, for their guidance and support throughout this journey.

Abstract

Suspensions from school were originally developed as an exclusionary form of discipline for severe infractions such as fighting and theft. In-school-suspension (ISS) involves students reporting to supervised designated areas or rooms on the school campus with assignments to complete. In an out-of-school suspension (OSS), a student is not allowed on the school campus for a period of time. The problem was elementary school students are disciplined using ISS or OSS; however, school personnel's perceptions about the benefits and limitations of school suspensions were unknown. The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. The theoretical framework of the study was Bandura's social cognitive learning theory. Two research questions addressed the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors about the (a) benefits and (b) limitations of ISS and OSS programs. For the basic qualitative study, four teachers, three administrators, one ISS monitor, and seven school counselors completed questionnaires, and a subsample of three were interviewed. Perceived benefits of suspension included removal of the disruptive student from the classroom; limitations included missed instruction and inadequate resources for properly supervised ISS. The overall consensus was suspensions have both benefits and limitations. The effectiveness or lack of effectiveness reported in the responses varied depending on individual students and their behaviors. Recommendations included positive preventive programs to reduce the use of suspensions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Warning systems in educational settings serve as useful predictors of students dropping out of school; such predictors include course performance, attendance rates, and behavior records (Lovelace, Reschly, & Appleton, 2018). Behavior records, according to Lovelace et al. (2018), include school suspensions. The basic qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, in-school suspension (ISS) monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. School suspensions are exclusionary discipline practices resulting in students being removed from regular classrooms as consequences of major disruptive behaviors and extreme cases of violating school rules and policies (Payne, 2009). The end consequences could be an assignment to ISS, out-of-school suspension (OSS), or an alternative school placement (Payne, 2009). Expulsion is the most extreme exclusionary discipline practice; a student is prevented from attending school and from being on any school property for the remainder of the school year (Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi, & Sutherland, 2018).

Two types of suspension from school exist: (a) OSS or regular suspension and (b) ISS. In ISS, students report to a designated area or classroom within the school to complete assignments (Stalker, 2018). Students are in this location for the entire school day with only designated restroom and lunch breaks. In OSS, students are not allowed on the school campus or any of its properties for a designated period. Suspensions are a common disciplinary action but are controversial (Cobb-Clark, Kassenboehmer, Le, McVicar, & Zhang, 2015). The benefits and limitations of school suspensions are not clear.

Background of the Study

Teachers and other school officials recognize the need for disciplinary actions and use school suspensions, although some students, parents, and civil rights groups may oppose suspensions and other exclusionary discipline practices (Cobb-Clark et al., 2015). Each year in the United States, three million students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) are suspended from school as the result of disciplinary actions (Kirkman, McNees, Stickl, Banner, & Hewitt, 2016). Regarding the reasons behind the suspensions, the National Education Association (as cited in O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017) reported 15% of teachers experienced student theft, 20% reported threats from a student, and 84% reported students speaking in rude or disrespectful ways. In addition, some teachers have negative perceptions of personal safety in schools due to negative student behaviors (O'Brennan et al., 2017).

Leaders in national, state, and local governments sought alternative measures for school discipline reform over time. By May 2015, 22 states had laws to encourage schools to decrease the use of exclusionary practices in discipline and offer more supportive disciplinary strategies or behavioral interventions (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017). According to the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Office (as cited in Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017), school suspensions and expulsions in U.S. public schools decreased by 20% between 2012 and 2014. The effectiveness of suspensions in changing student behaviors or school outcomes (e.g., school climate, safety, and student achievement) after students are suspended and return to class is unknown. This chapter includes the problem statement, the purpose and significance of the study, research questions, definitions of terms, delimitations and limitations, and assumptions, concluding with a summary.

Statement of the Problem

The problem was elementary school students are disciplined using in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of school suspension (OSS); however, school personnel's perceptions of the benefits and limitations of school suspensions were unknown. The ideal situation regarding elementary school suspensions would be for individuals not to violate school rules and policies, eliminating the need for suspensions in educational environments. Another ideal situation would be for students who were suspended from school to learn from mistakes and not violate rules in the future. These students would not want to suffer the negative consequences again.

The perspectives of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors about school suspensions are unknown. Arcia (2007) shared study results showing student factors are not the only consideration in suspension rates. Arcia noted if suspensions were explained mainly by student factors (behaviors occurring at certain ages), no difference would exist in the rates of suspension between elementary and middle school students. School suspensions are utilized in elementary schools as disciplinary practices as they are in middle and high schools (Arcia, 2007). Limited research exists specifically regarding the perceptions about the benefits and limitations of school suspension of the elementary school staff: teachers, counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors. This study could add knowledge to the field and may lead to methods and strategies to improve elementary school suspension programs, although the development of strategies was not the specific intent. The information could be beneficial for future studies. The study results were the perceptions of elementary teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding the limitations and benefits of elementary school suspension programs. Such knowledge could impact school discipline programs and potentially student behaviors in elementary schools.

According to the South Carolina State Department of Education (2019), only information on the number of students suspended from school for major offenses, such as assault, drug distribution, forced sexual offenses, homicide, kidnapping or abduction, robbery, firearms, or other weapons, is provided. For K-12 schools in 2018-2019, the South Carolina State Department of Education noted fewer than five incidences in each category of drug distribution and weapons. Data were not available regarding the number of suspensions for typical offenses (e.g., fighting, disrupting class, skipping class, stealing, truancy, etc.). Local schools reported the same group of students being repeatedly disrespectful and aggressive towards teachers; further, students were disrespectful and aggressive with each other (South Carolina State Department of Education, 2019). Alternative school programs are expanding in the local school district. Elementary school students with continued behavioral issues, as of 2017, are being transferred to the same alternative school campus as middle and high school students. The students are separated by level but share the same building.

In 2016, the Obama Administration introduced initiatives to reduce and eliminate discriminatory suspensions (Kerstetter & Stein, 2017). Research on school suspensions lacks information regarding whether suspensions help change student behaviors and whether the high numbers of ethnic minority student suspensions reflect an overall bias (Kerstetter & Stein, 2017). Additional research is necessary to determine the effects of school suspensions at the elementary school level, as most of the studies have focused on middle and high school students. A gap remains in the literature due to a lack of research on the benefits and limitations of suspensions on students' long-term or persistent behaviors overall and at the elementary level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, in-school suspension (ISS) monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. This study was necessary to investigate how schools utilized suspensions. If the study had not been conducted, teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, counselors, and other school staff would continue not knowing whether or not suspensions help improve the negative behaviors of students based on school staff perceptions about the benefits and limitations of school suspensions. As a result of the study, sharing the findings will provide educators and administrators with a new impetus to develop strategies to improve long-term negative student behavior. The study results should contribute to the knowledge base through the data on elementary teachers', school counselors', administrators', and ISS monitors' perceptions about the benefits and limitations of school suspensions. The information is expected to be shared with other teachers, administrators, district-level staff, parents, students, and community members in training through informational meetings, written memos, and other communications. The findings of the study will increase awareness of the perceptions of teachers, counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors on the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions and open dialog on future implications.

Significance of the Study

This basic qualitative study has significance for research in the field of elementary education and general educational research. The perspectives on the benefits and limitations of school suspensions of elementary teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors will provide additional understandings of ISS and OSS concerning elementary student behaviors.

Despite limited literature suggesting school suspensions are not effective and have negative outcomes, the effect of suspensions on student behavior is unclear, and the research linking suspensions and detrimental outcomes are relatively scarce (Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloughlin, 2015). Literature is sparse on the perceptions of teachers, school counselors, administrators, and suspension monitors on the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. The significance of this study is the focus on elementary school students in efforts to bridge the gaps within extant literature.

Individuals, stakeholders, and other groups in the education field may benefit from this study. The perspectives on the benefits and limitations of school suspensions of elementary teachers, school counselors, administrators, and in-school suspension (ISS) monitors who witness, assign, and observe the results of school suspensions firsthand are shared and discussed. The study results and discussion could lead to changes in the usage of suspensions at the elementary level. Collected data could be used in making changes in school and district-level discipline policies. One favorable outcome would be for the data results to add knowledge and additional understanding of the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Such knowledge could be used to develop positive supports and modifications to elementary school discipline policies to create educational environments more conducive to learning for all students.

This basic qualitative study was an exploration of the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and an ISS monitor about the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. The data collected provided more information about what elementary teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors believe about school

suspension programs. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to share ideas about what strategies used in schools have worked particularly well.

Research Questions

Exploring the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, in-school suspension (ISS) monitors on the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions was the objective of this study. The following research questions were developed to guide the study. Research question one was designed to gather data on the benefits of suspension programs in elementary schools. Research question two related to the perceived limitations of such suspension programs. The questions are:

Research Question One: How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive the benefits of ISS and out-of school suspension (OSS) programs in elementary schools?

Research Question Two: How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive the limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study was Albert Bandura's (1999) social cognitive learning theory. Social cognitive learning theory is an expanded form of the social learning theory, which suggests individuals learn from interactions with others in social contexts (Bandura, 1999). People develop similar behaviors after observing the behaviors of other people, in which the modeled behaviors could be imitated and assimilated, particularly if the observed experiences or behaviors are positive or include rewards. Although observed behaviors may be imitated, individuals may not necessarily change existing behaviors to the newly learned behaviors (Bandura, 1999). Other motivating factors include a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura,

1999). Social cognitive learning theory has provided a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behaviors (Bandura, 1999). Individuals learn behaviors through observation and using human thought processes. The process of human cognition in both adults and children affects social experiences and influences behaviors and development (Bandura, 1999).

Students in schools learn mainly through repetition (Magallon, Narbona, & Crespo-Eguilaz, 2016). An elementary school student who practices or studies memorizing multiplication facts or the correct spelling of vocabulary words usually learns these facts or correct spellings over time (Magallon et al., 2016). A student who demonstrates disruptive behaviors usually learns the behaviors have consequences. Students learn new behaviors by observing others who exhibit positive behaviors who may earn rewards or positive verbal praise. The student may or may not begin exhibiting all positive behaviors earning verbal or tangible rewards (Magallon et al., 2016).

Bandura (1999) claimed individuals learn by observing others. Learning is an internal process occurring with or without changes in behaviors or imitations of observed behaviors (Bandura, 1999). Students who are suspended from school may lack intrinsic reinforcements, noted by Bandura as a form of internal rewards, such as pride or a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Reinforcements and punishments are factors in social learning theory. Positive reinforcement following behavior by others encouraged the behavior among observers. Negative results or punishments given to others may cause observers not to engage in punished behaviors (Yilmaz, Yilmaz, & Demir-Yilmaz, 2019). The social cognitive learning theory goes more in-depth to focus on the idea of individuals being able to watch what others do, but the cognitive or human thought processes do not necessarily bring about a behavior change (Bandura, 1999).

Students may learn better and know better yet continue to exhibit negative behaviors (Bandura, 1999).

Another aspect of Bandura's (1999) learning theories is self-regulation. Self-regulation is the idea of individuals possessing skills to control or direct actions. Individuals are goal directed and can actively engage in developing functional patterns of thinking and behaving in response to environmental conditions to attain personal goals (Bandura, 1999). Students suspended from school may have a deficit in self-regulation skills. Self-regulation in the social cognitive learning theory further suggests individuals have knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and choose behaviors accordingly (Bandura, 1999).

Definitions of Terms

The following terminology was used in this basic qualitative study. Identifying and defining terms facilitate clarity and comprehension for the reader. The terms and definitions are necessary for developing an understanding of the study concepts.

Alternative school settings: include a broad range of educational settings from independent study programs to charter schools to schools within schools (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). Alternative schools may include a separate campus serving students at risk for failure in regular school. Enrollment may include students who have been removed from a regular school for severe or repeated discipline problems (Lehr et al., 2009).

Classroom management: led by the classroom teacher, the process necessary in maintaining order for effective learning and teaching to take place and to be reestablished when disrupted (Sahin, 2015).

Exclusionary discipline practices: result in students being removed from regular classrooms as consequences of major disruptive behaviors and extreme cases of violating school

rules and policies. The end consequence may be placements in in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), or an alternative school (Payne, 2009).

Expulsion: removal of a student from school, usually for one school year or the remainder of a school year. In some cases, expulsion may be permanent. Students are not allowed on any school district properties, including sports events (Valdebenito et al., 2018).

In-school suspension (ISS): an exclusionary discipline practice whereby a student is removed from a regular class and assigned to another designated area in the school to complete schoolwork under the supervision of an adult, not necessarily a teacher. Students in ISS have designated lunch and restroom breaks (Stalker, 2018).

Out-of-school suspension (OSS): an exclusionary discipline practice whereby a student is removed from the school campus temporarily for at least half a day (Stalker, 2018).

Assumptions

Acknowledging assumptions in a study is part of ethical research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An assumption in this study was participants would answer the instrument items, questionnaires, and interview questions honestly. Participants were expected to provide truthful, thoughtful responses and not rush through the reading of each item. This assumption was necessary for a study gathering participants' perceptions. Study participants were assured of confidentiality, which should have encouraged genuine responses. The questionnaires were available for the participants to complete in any personal, comfortable environment they chose in an effort to ensure truthful responses.

An additional assumption was the sample would provide appropriate data, representing elementary-level school staff. This assumption was based on data collected from several elementary schools and multiple groups of stakeholders with knowledge of the topic. As

participation was voluntary and without inducement, participants likely had knowledge of and interest in the topic. A final assumption was the ability to analyze the data without undue bias, a premise inherent in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By acknowledging potential personal bias and preconceptions before conducting a study and analyzing data, researchers minimize such bias in the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Delimitations

The coverage of this study initially was to be five elementary schools in one school district in a southeastern state of the United States of America. Data collection was intended to take place over a few weeks in a single school semester. The sample size was to be up to 60 questionnaire respondents (50 elementary school teachers, five administrators, and five in-school suspension (ISS) monitors). Due to lack of participation from teachers, administrators, and monitors in the school district, an amendment was requested and granted from the American College of Education's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to add counselors. As a result of this addition, the final sample included 15 participants, including school counselors.

Criteria for inclusion were participants must have worked in public elementary schools for at least a full school year and been either an elementary school teacher (regular education), administrator, school counselor, or ISS monitor. As with any qualitative design, the results of this study may not be transferable to other districts, areas, or grade levels (i.e., those that are not elementary schools). Study results are not intended to be used in composing alternatives to school suspensions, but rather to compile the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study, impacting the results or the transferability of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Typical limitations in qualitative studies may include problems with a lack of complete responses from participants, sample size or attrition (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, a limitation was the small number of participants willing to participate, thus the findings could not be broadly extended. Another limitation was having to seek participants from different sources other than the district contacted initially. Having to do so could result in variances based on locations and experience levels with in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of school suspensions (OSS). Acknowledging limitations enables future researchers to build upon the study.

The study was limited by the use of qualitative methodology alone, to gather rich data on the phenomenon of this basic qualitative study. Supporting quantitative data might have added to the findings; such methodologies could be considered in future studies. Results from the study may not transfer to other school districts, as data represent the personal perceptions of elementary school staff in different school districts.

Questionnaire participation might have been limited based on the open-ended nature of the questions. One purpose of a short questionnaire was to encourage participants to answer all items and answer them completely. The use of face-to-face or telephone interviews with a subsample was designed to mitigate the limitations of the questionnaire. Participants had two weeks to complete the questionnaire, but events in the study schools could have prevented time from being available for completion. Questionnaires take time, and individuals with time restraints may have struggled to complete instruments and not given adequate responses. Study participants' experience levels may also have affected responses to the data collection

instruments. The interviews included a smaller sample from the overall group of participants. Some might have been concerned about participation in any study leading to unfavorable changes in elementary school suspension programs (Simon & Goes, 2013). Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their identity for this study.

An additional limitation is inherent in qualitative research: potential researcher bias during data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflecting on personal biases and preconceptions before data collection mitigated this limitation. Acknowledging personal expectations before the analysis of the data helped to avoid letting bias contaminate the initial analysis. Completing the research and reporting the results took longer than anticipated due to a slow response from the study participants. Difficulties were experienced in locating participants willing to participate

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 presented the definition of exclusionary discipline practices as those taking students away from the regular school settings for designated periods. Forms of exclusionary discipline practices include in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of school suspension (OSS). Assignment to alternative schools and expulsion are additional forms of exclusionary discipline practices. Students suspended from school miss valuable instruction. The literature was limited about how effective suspensions are on student behaviors, particularly in elementary schools, and the perceptions of school personnel on suspensions.

The chapter presented a description of ISS and OSS. Each year, an average of three million students are suspended from school (Kirkman et al., 2016). This basic qualitative study focused on elementary school students. Chapter 1 included the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, definitions of terms, delimitations, limitations, assumptions,

and a summary. A review of the literature on elementary school suspensions and student behaviors is included in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Educators are charged with the task of providing students with an adequate education in a safe environment. The problem was elementary school students are disciplined using in-school suspensions (ISS) or out-of-school suspensions (OSS); however, school personnel perceptions about the benefits and limitations of school suspensions were unknown. The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. To provide safe school and classroom environments, teachers and administrators discipline students who are disruptive and who break school discipline policies. Warning systems in educational settings serve as useful predictors of students dropping out of school (Lovelace et al., 2018). Examples of such warning systems are course performance, attendance rates, and behavior records, including school suspensions (Lovelace et al., 2018). The background of the problem was suspensions have not been proven to change negative student behaviors (Lovelace et al., 2018). School suspensions continue in schools. The focus for this study was on the perceptions of elementary teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of suspensions.

Three million students are suspended from school in K-12 each year for disciplinary consequences (Kirkman et al., 2016). The authors noted some studies have reported no proof of suspensions changing or correcting student behaviors, but rather suspensions adversely impacting students' reading ability, college entrance scores, and dropout rates (Kirkman et al., 2016). Disciplinary problems or unwanted behaviors in schools affect learning and teaching, preventing students from achieving success (Sadik & Ozturk, 2018). Schools need orderly and healthy working environments (Sadik & Ozturk, 2018).

Literature Search Strategy

Online computer databases were available to search for items such as journal articles and conference papers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Keywords taken from the topic of the study were entered into a database's search area for the titles of written documents. Research articles then provided additional links or source articles to be included in structured papers. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested utilizing free online databases of literature along with any available through academic libraries. The literature reviewed for this study was found through various research data resources. Searches on the topic were mainly conducted through ProQuest, EBSCOHost, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The library for the American College of Education provided access to databases for journal article searches. Course presentations and documents were reviewed as well as a collection of journal articles and links to additional information. Search terms included *teacher*, *administrator*, *in-school suspension monitors*, *perspectives on school suspensions*, *school suspensions and elementary schools*, and *exclusionary discipline in the elementary schools*.

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's (1999) social cognitive learning theory, an expanded form of the social learning theory, was the theoretical framework for this study. According to the components of the theory, individuals learn from interactions with others in social contexts (Bandura, 1999). Individuals imitate or model behaviors of others, especially if the observed experiences are positive or include a reward (Bandura, 1999). The theory further implies individuals may be able to imitate positive behaviors but may or may not change the existing behaviors to the newly observed behaviors (Bandura, 1999). The social cognitive learning theory may provide individuals a framework for understanding, predicting, or changing human behaviors through

observations and by using human thought processes (Bandura, 1999). This theory may be carried over into elementary schools about the behaviors of students. Students may learn better and know better, but continue to exhibit negative behaviors (Bandura, 1999).

Another component of Bandura's (1999) learning theories is self-regulation. Self-regulation is the idea of individuals possessing skills to control or direct their own actions. With self-regulation, individuals can be goal directed and able to actively engage in developing functional patterns of thinking and behaving in response to environmental conditions to attain personal goals (Bandura, 1999). Students being suspended from school may have a deficit in self-regulation skills. Self-regulation in the social cognitive learning theory further suggests individuals have knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and choose behavior accordingly (Bandura, 1999).

Research Literature Review

Educators commonly assume students were less likely to exhibit problem behaviors if suspended from school (Massar, McIntosh, & Eliason, 2015). Students continue to be subjected to school suspensions in schools. Yet, Massar et al. (2015) reported limited evidence has been presented of repeated suspensions helping to diminish negative behaviors or serving to deter problem behaviors. Despite a thorough literature search for research relevant to this study, no data were found specifically focusing on the perspectives of elementary school teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and counselors on suspensions. The lack of published literature on the specific topic further suggested a need for the investigation. This literature review included school discipline over time, school resource officers, aggression and discipline, a rationale for school suspensions, literature specific to elementary school suspensions, what the literature

revealed, concerns with exclusionary discipline, and potential alternatives to suspensions or exclusionary discipline practices.

School staff and administrators are responsible for providing an education to all students fairly and equitably. Administrators and school staff are charged with keeping students and staff members safe as well. Educating students is the primary mission of any school system, and school districts adopt policies and codes of conduct, rules, and expectations to address unacceptable behaviors (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). School suspensions and expulsions are the most severe consequences for students who exhibit unacceptable behaviors (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013) and are considered exclusionary practices.

School administrators have shared the definition of discipline as responsibility, order, and systems (Sadik & Ozturk, 2018). In a disciplined school, nearly all staff members fulfill duties, students are academically successful, they have complete educational materials and resources, and the buildings are orderly and clean (Sadik & Ozturk, 2018). School administrators expect parents to support school decisions and discipline regulations in the education system, which are continuously updated according to social conditions. Continued studies may impact school discipline practices. Social and cultural changes, as well as developments in information and communications technology, affect schools and student behaviors (Sadik & Ozturk, 2018). Traditional teaching has been altered by studies yielding new insights and structures to fulfill the function of educating and teaching future citizens and workers (Sadik & Ozturk, 2018). Research on school discipline may lead to improved practices to create environments conducive to learning.

Times have changed, and school methods of handling discipline have had to change as well (Nance, 2016). More than 30 years of research provided evidence of increased referrals of

students subjected to exclusionary discipline practices by schools (Nance, 2016). The evidence reported by Nance's from 30 years of research provided information about schools increasingly relying on extreme forms of punishments, such as suspensions, to maintain controlled discipline (2016).

Most examples in the literature on school discipline have focused on middle and high school students (Jacobsen, Pace, & Ramirez, 2016). One study focused on students, birth through nine- years- old, who were studied through interviews with the students' parents. Jacobsen et al. (2016) examined the association between the nine-year-olds' behavioral problems in schools and suspensions. Based on the findings, the authors suggested the issues of classroom management, classroom organization, and instructional formats as the causes of student problem behaviors. Jacobsen et al. reported suspensions have harmful effects on children by taking away instructional time and labeling suspended students as "troublemakers." The study involved nine-year-olds from an urban area where 11% were suspended from school by age nine (Jacobsen et al., 2016).

Another study project conducted in 2009 included 15 high school teachers' perceptions of suspensions (Garcia & Taaca-Warren, 2009). The participants shared three main reasons for suspensions as fighting, disrespect towards teachers, and attendance. Exclusionary disciplinary actions, suspensions, were used as consequences for students with poor attendance records, leading to increased time out of the classroom.

Perceptions of Teachers About Exclusionary Discipline

Many schools replace suspensions and expulsions with alternative strategies to keep students in the classroom. The purpose is to address the underlying issues of stress and trauma while preventing students from missing instruction (Loewenberg, 2018) . Yet teacher polls in

America have revealed skepticism about policies limiting the use of exclusionary discipline practices, according to Loewenberg (2018). Loewenberg reported survey information from two groups of teachers, 1,000 in one group and 641 in another group, surveyed online by Educators for Excellence and *Education Next*. *Education Next* (Loewenberg, 2018) reported poll results where only 29% of teachers supported federal policies to prevent the expulsion and suspension of African American and Latino students more often than other students. Only 26% supported the same policies on the school district level, according to Loewenberg. Another poll conducted by a group named Educators for Excellence reported only 39% of teachers thought school suspensions were effective in improving student behaviors (Loewenberg, 2018). The consensus from the majority of teachers polled was exclusionary discipline was not effective, but teachers did not want policies to be imposed from the top-down concerning exclusionary disciplinary practices. Teachers polled during the surveys shared a need for professional development on nonpunitive discipline for assistance in getting away from expulsions and suspensions (Loewenberg, 2018).

One teacher in New York City chaired a campaign introducing restorative practices as an alternative method of approaching student behavior problems instead of suspending students (Winslow, 2016). The strategy the teacher supported involved teachers and students coming together to discuss the main problems behind the students acting out, which could be home issues, anxiety, or stress. A 10-year educator in Winslow's (2016) study shared feeling safer having had a face-to-face conversation with a disruptive student as opposed to not talking with the student and just seeing the student in the hall or class in the next encounter. The teacher worked with Teachers Unite, a union supporting restorative practices with educator input into new policies to help eliminate exclusionary practices in discipline.

Another example involved the New York United Federation of Teachers, the largest teachers' group in the United States comprised of 100,000 members (Winslow, 2016). Messages from the New York United Federation of Teachers centered on putting students out of school (Winslow, 2016). Locating literature on the perceptions of administrators and ISS monitors was difficult. The previous research examples shared information about classroom teachers' perspectives only. The current study was designed to help fill the gap in the literature regarding perceptions of not only teachers, but administrators, suspension monitors, and school counselors about suspensions.

School Discipline Over Time

The educational process has evolved, as have the strategies and policies to promote safe schools. Before the 1950s, educational systems were referred to as inclusive systems of support focusing on social mobility. The 1930s and 1940s revealed the main concerns for schools, administrators, and the general public related to students' appropriate dress, gum chewing in class, making too much noise in the class or hallway, and dropping trash around the school (Mowen, 2014). Post-World War II and into the 1950s, concerns expanded to include a lack of respect for authority, vandalism, and theft in the classrooms (Mowen, 2014). Mowen (2014) reported how the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement led to more significant concerns over school behaviors. During those times, the media were blamed for prompting increased negative behaviors with its coverage of violence (Mowen, 2014).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Congress implemented policies across the nation on school behaviors (Mowen, 2014). Those years were a time of drug-related crimes, the war on drugs, and gangs in schools, according to the author. The change of times and new and improved systems of security through technological advances led to a shift utilizing security systems,

surveillance cameras, metal detectors, school resource officers, and new school policies, including zero tolerance into the 1990s and 2000s (Mowen, 2014). Mowen (2014) noted the increase in technological and other security advances was not prompted by an increase in school violent activities overall, but rather by the growth of increased school shootings alone. Although the general public often expects school shootings to be events in schools with high crime, shootings took place in predominately White, middle-class schools in the suburbs (Mowen, 2014). With an increase in events of school shootings and similar crimes, the federal government and state governments continue to implement policies intended to protect the youth of America in the school systems (Mowen, 2014). By 2014, according to Mowen, school security measures and enforcements were largely geared towards zero tolerance policies affecting how discipline was carried out and the measures used.

According to reports by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (as cited in Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017), the number of suspensions and expulsions in the nation's schools dropped by 20% between 2012 and 2014. This trend could be attributed to school discipline reforms from 2011 when the Obama Administration launched initiatives encouraging schools to utilize alternative strategies instead of suspensions (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017). The Supportive School Discipline Initiative was launched by the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice to coordinate efforts in school discipline reform on the federal level (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017). Steinberg and Lacoë (2017) reported the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice released informational material packages supporting state and local efforts for improving school discipline and school climate. On the local school district and state levels, laws were revised encouraging schools to implement supportive, nonpunitive discipline (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017). The U.S. Department of Education and the

Department of Justice suggested replacing suspensions with behavioral intervention and counseling programs to prevent dropouts and provide assistance for at-risk students (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017).

Zero Tolerance Policies

The term *zero tolerance* refers to uncompromising, strict automatic punishment to eliminate undesired behaviors of individuals (Wilson, 2014); the term is used throughout the media about schools and security. Zero tolerance emerged from policies on drug and weapons charges on the federal level in the 1980s. Policymakers started applying zero tolerance policies to educational settings in the late 1980s with expulsion from school if students had been charged with certain activities (Triplett, Allen, & Lewis, 2014). Publicly, the term zero tolerance became more prevalent as a result of higher crime waves in schools and the influx of school shootings. In 1994, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act requiring the enforcement of zero tolerance of dangerous weapons, explosives, and arson.

President Bill Clinton signed the Gun-Free Schools Act into law, which was set up to expel students who brought guns on school property (Skiba & Losen, 2016). The act included punishments for students bringing other weapons and drugs on school property along with punishments for those participating in gang-related activities (Skiba & Losen 2016). Automatic expulsion and court referrals were deemed the punishments, and non-compliant schools would risk losing federal funds (Wilson, 2014). Shortly thereafter, schools began suspending students more and expelling more students for alcohol, drugs, tobacco, insubordination, fighting, and various disruptive behaviors. An example of a student being subjected to the zero tolerance policy was an elementary school student suspended for three days for pointing his finger like a play gun or, as the principal noted, a Level Two lookalike firearm (Wilson, 2014). Suspensions

and expulsions became a punishment of choice and not the last resort punishment for many schools.

Individuals who are critical of zero tolerance policies claim no credible evidence exists supporting the policies as effective (Kodelja, 2019). Supporters of zero tolerance policies might question the methods used to implement the policies but have argued violence should not be tolerated at school (Kodelja, 2019). School suspensions and expulsions have led to reduced infractions for young children because children are still being socialized to the norms of the school at the early ages of development (Jacobsen et al., 2016). Additionally, for younger children, parents reinforce the idea of schools not tolerating negative actions and behaviors because parents have to miss time from work to take care of the child or meet at school about the issues (Jacobsen et al., 2016). In cases where students brought weapons or drugs to school, immediate suspensions and expulsions have taken place. These students either receive schooling at home utilizing the computer or are forced to enroll in alternative school settings.

Opponents of the zero tolerance policies focus on the overuse of the policy as well as the racial and ethnic disparities (Jacobsen et al., 2016). The policies of zero tolerance are likened to “get tough” policies, but ethnic minorities continue to be overly represented for harsher punishments compared to students in other groups committing the same violations (Jacobsen et al., 2016). Jacobsen et al. (2016) explained these opponents suggested new policies be adopted on national, state, and local levels of the educational and legal systems.

School Resource Officers

Elementary, middle, and high schools have school resource officers stationed at the schools on a part-time or full-time basis. School resource officers are armed police officers in full uniforms (Counts, Randall, Ryan, & Katsiyannis, 2018). Duties may include a combination

of law enforcement, mentoring, and teaching. Patrolling the school and investigating complaints of criminal activities fall under law enforcement duties. The teaching portion of school resource officer duties may involve facilitating preventative, educational programs such as Gang Resistance Education and Training along with Drug Abuse Resistance Education (Counts et al., 2018). Officers may serve as mentors to students and advisors to administrators and educators on school campuses. Additional duties of school resource officers may include attending neighborhood meetings, being present at after-school programs and sporting events, and completing paperwork (Counts et al., 2018). Students are subjected to random property searches on the school grounds, are under surveillance by security cameras, and may be expected to follow rigid discipline policies (Perry & Morris, 2014).

School resource officers are commonplace, with an increasing presence in schools throughout the nation (Counts et al., 2018). Although school resource officers are called upon to handle school discipline at increasing rates, often no formal guidelines or policies exist about duties. According to research, 76% of officers are called on by school administrators to handle and maintain disciplinary issues (Counts et al., 2018). Programs using school resource officers are rarely evaluated (Counts et al., 2018).

Having school resource officers handle school disciplinary issues is contradictory to the initial intent of the National Association of School Resource Officers (2015) position statement. The position statement prohibits school resource officers from being involved in formal school discipline issues falling under the administrators' responsibilities (National Association of School Resource Officers, 2015). Misuse of school resource officers in schools occurs when the officers' purposes and roles are not clearly defined (Counts et al., 2018). Officers may be handling discipline issues in schools and not being able to focus on keeping schools safe as

initially intended. The increased use of school resource officers for discipline has led to more students being arrested for behaviors and has increased the likelihood students will experience suspensions and expulsions from school (Counts et al., 2018).

Aggression and Discipline

Problem behaviors may increase or evolve for students with one factor, childhood aggression, important in predicting and understanding disciplinary actions (Fite, Evans, Pederson, & Tampke, 2017). Aggression may be defined as hostile or violent behaviors or attitudes exhibited in response to a perceived threat. Aggressive behavior is acting on impulse. Reactive aggression refers to defensive actions usually guided by anger and may be associated with elementary-age children violating rules and retaliating (Fite et al., 2017). These violations are usually minor (Fite et al., 2017). Proactive aggression refers to actions designed to achieve desired goals. More severe, antisocial, long-term outcomes may be associated with proactive aggression in children of all ages (Fite et al., 2017).

Rationale for School Suspensions

Schools, like other organizations, need rules and policies to function and accomplish goals. Discipline is aimed at developing self-control skills and responsibility of students through the support of students' mental, social, and emotional development (Sadik, 2017). Like other forms of discipline, suspensions are punishments or reactions for removing disruptive behaviors. Sadik (2017) included information from a study noting student perceptions concerning discipline were mostly positive, and students understood the need for discipline. Still, the students' negative perceptions were geared towards the application of discipline. Suggestions have been made for the implementation of practices to create orderly, civil, and safe school climates teaching students the basic values of cooperation and respect (Skiba & Losen, 2016).

Exclusionary discipline practices have been noted in some literature as having negative effects or consequences on students' life chances (Perry & Morris, 2014). Despite this conclusion, exclusionary discipline practices and policies are often deemed necessary for safe schools (Perry & Morris, 2014). An overall assumption was the use of exclusionary practices leads to school and classroom environments more conducive for learning (Perry & Morris, 2014). Suspended students in OSS are banned from the school in an effort to restore order, although the suspensions could unintentionally trigger additional adverse consequences (Perry & Morris, 2014). The students assigned to in-school suspension (ISS), are out of the regular classroom.

The goals of traditional school systems for using OSS are to achieve safe environments for students and staff members (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Such goals include decreasing violent behaviors, criminal activities, and drug usage and trafficking while limiting the influence of offenders on others. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) report noted the offenders were to be punished through OSS, which in turn, takes the offenders away from school and other students, with the intended message of no tolerance for negative behaviors. Traditionally, school suspensions and expulsions have been reserved for severe, dangerous, and recalcitrant offending students (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Suspensions from schools are now standard tools used for demanding compliance and obedience (Wilson, 2014). Incidents likely handled years ago by a trip to the principal's office now may be dealt with by the police and the judicial system, which contributes to the climate of exclusions and suspensions (Wilson, 2014).

Other factors affecting the rates students are suspended from school include a school's administration and teacher training. A small study involving two schools (a high school and an

elementary school) examined different aspects of the assistant principals' leadership practices (Clayton & Goodwin, 2015). One indicator was the fact the administrators could have positive impacts on students and school culture through disciplinary practices (Clayton & Goodwin, 2015). The results from the study included reports from the assistant principals on the importance of working deliberately with students of low socioeconomic levels and understanding the school culture to help influence instruction and the creation of a sense of safety and value with students (Clayton & Goodwin, 2015). Clayton and Goodwin's (2015) study revealed the importance of administrators to view students as collective units and individuals in creating safe school communities, as the students come to school carrying influences from the community. In turn, the administrators could have positive or negative impacts on the rates students are suspended from school.

Elementary School Suspensions

Data collected about elementary school students were reported in the Fragile Families Study (Jacobsen et al., 2016). A study by Jacobsen et al. (2016) revealed 19% of students from 20 large US cities had been suspended or expelled by nine years of age. These students, born between 1998 and 2000, participated in the research. Data from the Fragile Families Study revealed elementary students suspended on average were between five and nine years of age. Further, 10% of U.S. elementary students are suspended or expelled annually.

Some school districts and states have passed legislation limiting the circumstances in which preschool and elementary students may be subjected to exclusionary school discipline practices. One example would be changing discipline practices to not utilize exclusionary school discipline for activities such as cutting bread at lunch into the shape of a gun and practicing to use it as such, which previously led to students being suspended. Balmert and Sparling (2017)

reported these examples, where students are automatically suspended for any violence-related activity, are representative of zero tolerance discipline policies. The lawmaker was concerned, noting the boys' actions were not threatening behaviors to self or other students. Teachers and administrators who opposed the lawmaker's suggestions preferred making such decisions on a case-by-case basis. According to the authors, the lawmaker suggested as alternatives more teacher training for teachers on de-escalating behaviors, more consistent discipline policies, and more mental health counseling. Balmert and Sparling noted states such as Ohio have reported much lower numbers of elementary-level student suspensions as compared to others. Yet, the number of young students suspended in Ohio was deemed higher than the desired expectations of school administrators and teachers. The largest numbers of elementary student suspensions result from disobedient or disruptive behaviors (Balmert & Sparling, 2017). Other young students have been suspended for theft, tobacco use, false bomb threats, harassment, and truancy (Balmert & Sparling, 2017).

What the Data and Research Reveal

The main objective of school suspensions is removing disruptive students from class and deterring other students from engaging in similar behaviors. Yet, data and literature have shown students excluded from schools were likely to be associated with negative behavioral and academic outcomes in the future (Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014). The data concerning the disciplinary actions of schools have been reported by districts annually for use in state and federal reports like those of the Civil Rights Data Collection Group (Nishioka, Sigeoka, & Lolic, 2017). A report from 2015 included school suspension data for every school district in the United States, indicating the vast racial disparities in suspension rates needed to be addressed (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015). During the 2011-2012 school year, 3.5

million students from public schools on all levels were suspended from school at least one time. Losen et al. (2015) reported those numbers to equate to the number of individuals needed to fill almost all the Super Bowl stadium seats for the past 45 games. The same report indicated 10% of elementary students had been suspended from school at least one time during the 2011-2012 school year. On average, a school suspension is for 3.5 days; U.S. public school students, including elementary level students, lost an estimated 18 million instructional days in 2011-2012 (Losen et al., 2015).

Florida data reports suggested punitive and exclusionary discipline practices have been disproportionately assigned to students across race, gender, and disability (Gagnon, Gurel, & Barber, 2017). More specifically, male students were suspended more than females, and African Americans were most disproportionately punished out of all groups (particularly Black male students). Students with disabilities were punished more than nondisabled students (Gagnon et al., 2017).

An eight-year longitudinal study revealed one suspension, elementary or secondary school, increased the risk of a student dropping out of school in the future from 16% to 32% (Skiba et al., 2014). Two suspensions increased the dropout risk to 42%, and the authors suggested suspensions were more of a predictor of dropout than socioeconomic status and grade point average. The same study reported 61% of individuals in juvenile justice detention facilities had been expelled or suspended from school the year before going into juvenile justice custody. Another study, which included over 500 males in a juvenile facility, revealed 80% had been suspended from school (Skiba et al., 2014). The authors reported on a different study in Texas following a cohort of students in Grades seven-12 (Skiba et al., 2014). Exclusionary discipline practices tripled the students' chances of having contact with juvenile justice within the next

year. Tracking 10 years of data on a cohort of students going to grade three, another study, reported by Skiba et al., 2014, found students with one or two suspensions were eight times more likely to end up in an alternative school. The data referred to elementary students before entering middle or high school. Also, the students with three or more suspensions were 25 times more likely to end up in an alternative school by middle or high school (Skiba et al., 2014).

The results of a report conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) Council on School Health reported a student in grade nine was 50% more prone to drop out of school with each OSS. These results were based on historical data; these same students were suspended while in elementary school. The same study reported a 19% decrease in the probability of students enrolling in postsecondary educational institutions after a history of school suspensions (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). A different study from 2011 found 34% of OSS had been issued for nonviolent behaviors (Losen, Martinez, & Okelola, 2014), although OSS was created for more serious, violent behaviors.

Additional Concerns With Exclusionary Discipline Relating to Benefits and Limitations

Many long-term negative consequences associated with expelling, arresting, and suspending students, are affecting students, students' families, communities, and society (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). A popular argument against the continued use of suspensions and other exclusionary discipline practices has involved the disparities among student groups (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Repeated studies have documented racial disparities in school discipline on all levels of schooling (Nance, 2016). Additional studies have demonstrated students' race and gender play a role in which students are assigned exclusionary discipline practices (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are suspended from school more often than White students, according to Gregory and Fergus

(2017). The studies revealed transgender, bisexual, gay, and lesbian students are disciplined more often as well. Gregory and Fergus reported national data from 2013-2014 disclosed the disproportionate suspension of African American students includes preschool or early elementary students.

Loveless (2017) studied one state's disparities in suspension rates. In 2015, Hispanic students made up over half of California's K-12 enrollment, with 3.3 million students (53.6%). White students constituted 24.6% of enrollment (1.5 million), followed by Asian students, 8.8% (about 550,000 students), and Black students, 6% (about 370,000 students). Loveless compared the ratio of suspensions to enrollment. In 2015, 17.8% of Black students were suspended in California, compared to 4.4% of White students and 5.2% of Hispanic students.

Some individuals may argue those students appearing to be subjected to exclusionary discipline practices more than others are students who misbehave more often. On the contrary, data have revealed behavioral justification as a misconception (Nance, 2016). The Office of Civil Rights reported repeatedly finding schools where African Americans are disciplined more often and more severely than White students in similar situations and reported the discrepancy was a serious problem (Nance, 2016). These issues continue to be a problem because the teachers and administrators allow stereotypes and attitudes to misguide decisions (Nance, 2016).

Reforms to Alleviate Concerns With Exclusionary Discipline

The adoption of prevention-based practices reduces problematic behaviors and exclusionary discipline issues (Massar et al., 2015). Such practices could contribute to safe environments for students and staff while improving academic achievement (Massar et al., 2015). The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice jointly comprised and sent letters in 2014 to school districts urging school officials to avoid racial bias in

suspending and expelling students from school (Peterson, 2015). School districts found in violation would encounter legal actions. As a result of the letters, one school district in California faced charges by the U.S. Department of Education and settled by agreeing to reduce suspensions of African American and Hispanic students (Peterson, 2015). In recent decades, racial bias has become more evident in disciplinary practices across the nation.

Historically, school systems have been charged with ensuring equality for students in receiving an education, as with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The No Child Left Behind Act was designed to help close standardized test-score gaps between ethnic minority students and White and Asian students (Walker, 2014). Various suggested measures have been made for school leaders to help alleviate the continued disparities in school disciplinary policies (Walker, 2014). For example, the Children's Defense Fund suggested schools document and track school-based arrests to disaggregate data by race and gender for a better understanding of the disproportionate numbers (Walker, 2014). School personnel could implement more equitable and inclusionary practices and policies once a better understanding is achieved through professional development. Stories, counter stories, support groups, and conflict-resolution programs could be developed offering alternatives to violence and exclusionary discipline (Walker, 2014). School staff could work to develop more positive, respectful cultural school climates for all groups (Walker, 2014). The U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education issued federal guidelines to reduce the use of expulsions and suspensions along with reducing the ethnic and racial disparities in the rates of suspensions and expulsions (Skiba et al., 2014). A national consensus evolved, noting ineffective and inequitable discipline practices needed to be replaced with preventive and instructional approaches for developing healthy and safe school climates (Skiba et al., 2014).

Supports and interventions are needed on the school and classroom levels (Flynn, Lissy, Alicea, Tazartes, & McKay, 2016). The New York City Department of Education shared information from one study in which implementing professional development on classroom and behavior management to reduce suspensions during a school year led to a significant decrease in suspensions the following year (Flynn et al., 2016). Flynn et al. (2016) revealed a decrease in suspension rates when teachers and staff members were coached during staff development sessions promoting collaboration and support in changing and sustaining positive approaches to practices of behavior management using shared goals and language.

Relationships Between Teachers and Students

Studies have been conducted on the relationships between teachers and students. In a study of 182 students of diverse backgrounds, students reported the importance of teachers caring about students (Jeffrey, Auger, & Pepperell, 2013). The same study revealed students with caring teachers were willing to work harder in academics and were less likely to participate in risky health activities. Students who reported feeling teachers cared about students were more apt to follow rules and discipline policies (Jeffrey et al., 2013). On the other side of the same survey results, students who reported feeling teachers did not care shared being less likely to follow the rules and adhere to classroom management strategies. Elementary school students are more easily influenced by teachers due to younger children's developmental stages in life (Jeffrey et al., 2013). Teachers may create foundations for elementary school students to adapt more easily to academic and social environments. In elementary schools, positive relationships between teachers and students may result in a greater academic work ethic among students and fewer suspensions (Jeffrey et al., 2013).

Family Engagement

Partnerships between schools and families have been shown to improve academic and social aspects for students (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). The No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 encouraged the inclusion of families in children's education (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). These laws recommended improved communication, participation, and engagement of families (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). In the study by Ratliffe and Ponte (2018), parents reported feeling less as outsiders or just observers in the child's school when given legitimate roles on the school campus.

Traditionally, school partnerships focused on relationships between schools and parents; more recent studies have focused on relationships between schools and families (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). In 2015, the Every Child Succeeds Act changed the terminology from *parental involvement* to *parent and family engagement* (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). The terminology was changed to recognize all family members in caring for a child. Literature commonly uses the term *family* in school partnerships (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). The change of terminology to engagement recognized individual schools determine the nature of the school–family relationship and should actively seek to engage family members in student education (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018).

Long-Term Effects of Suspension

Investigations are focused more on understanding factors contributing to problem behaviors in children with increased concerns referencing the school-to-prison pipeline (Fite et al., 2017). Students on all levels, including elementary students, are at risk for more serious consequences, suspensions, and expulsions, once they begin to receive disciplinary infractions. Fite et al. (2017) suggested early interventions for children receiving minor infractions to help

prevent more long-term, severe outcomes. Overall, the majority of the studies on disciplinary actions focused on middle and high school students, but elementary students are being suspended from school at increasing rates.

Disruptive behaviors in the classroom indicate student disengagement (Dockery, 2012). As inappropriate behaviors in classrooms increase in frequency, academic achievement is lowered, and the school dropout rate increases. The effect on academics is especially true if the infractions began in the primary elementary grades, as Dockery (2012) noted. Students with disciplinary infractions may be subjected to exclusionary discipline practices and are more apt to get in trouble with the law and participate in violence and substance abuse later in life. These practices may lead to difficulty in graduating from high school, attending postsecondary schools, and achieving gainful employment (Dockery, 2012). Students subjected to repeated exclusionary discipline practices tend to drop out of school or leave with poor skills, landing low-paying jobs

Alternatives and Recommendations for Reducing Exclusionary Discipline Concerns

The Discipline Disparities Research-to-Practice Collaboration released a series of recommendations to help reduce the disparities and the number of students subjected to exclusionary discipline practices like suspensions (Skiba et al., 2014). Some of the recommendations were school-based, including the development of interventions from the viewpoint of equity in instruction and educational opportunities. Another suggestion was for schools to develop plans for supportive student-teacher relationships to reduce and prevent conflicts (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). Programs, in turn, should be geared toward providing bias-free classrooms, respectful environments, improved cultural responsiveness of instruction, and improved classroom interactions with increased academic rigor. The group further

recommended schools use disaggregated discipline data to analyze the causes of conflicts, focus on problem-solving approaches, focus on recognizing the voices of the students and families, and reintegrate the students after conflicts (Skiba et al., 2014).

Restorative justice

Restorative justice intentionally brings together individuals with opposing viewpoints. The process brings together those who harm and those who have been harmed face-to-face with the intention for all involved to listen to each other's voice (Davis, 2017). Restorative justice is an alternative for punitive justice, where the intent is to find out what law or rule has been broken, who did it, and what the punishment should be (Stefanovska, 2013). In restorative justice, those involved focus on who was harmed, identify the obligations and needs of all affected individuals and determine how best to heal the individuals involved (Stefanovska, 2013). Implementations of restorative justice use problem-solving approaches on issues of discipline in schools and are proactive rather than reactive (Riley, 2018). Restorative justice is used in many schools as an alternative to exclusionary punishment in discipline (Augustine et al., 2018). Programs of restorative justice build a sense of community through participants' discussions and explorations, which connect the classroom members by increasing empathy and compassion (Riley, 2018). After implementing restorative justice, Denver public schools reduced suspension rates by close to 47% across the district, with reduced suspension rates for all ethnic groups, especially for Black and Latino students (Skiba & Losen, 2016).

A teacher studied the literature on restorative justice and began using classroom circle times or meeting times, a common practice with elementary school students (Ashley, 2006). The class meetings may be held at any time during the school day and allow students to share feelings and comments on situations in the class. Evolving from the use of restorative practices

in the criminal system, restorative practices in schools rely on the basic notion of people being connected through relationships within a community. When an individual is harmed, the community is torn (Augustine et al., 2018). The practice gives the offender time to reflect, apologize, and make amends to restore the sense of community (Augustine et al., 2018).

Class circles create safe places for students to connect, understand others, solve problems, and develop relationships (Riley, 2018). On the elementary level, class circles may begin with the group exploring one quote or statement, for example, about color. The teacher could begin by asking students to share their favorite colors. Students could be instructed to practice breathing techniques to help create a calming atmosphere. Taking turns sharing their favorite color, students speak only when a designated object (ball, stuffed animal, etc.) is passed around from person to person. The person holding the object has the turn and the right to speak, teaching turn-taking, and encouraging listening without interruptions (Riley, 2018). Later, the circle times could include discussions about specific incidents having taken place with the students. Restorative justice enables teachers and schools to move away from power-based discipline practices focusing on rules, punishments, and rewards to a focus on educating children (Ashley, 2006).

Classroom teachers and administrators have alternatives for exclusionary discipline practices. Restorative justice and practices are embraced by some elementary schools to help create trusting, caring classroom communities (Ashley, 2006). Students experience incidents of disrespect, social disconnect, hate, and lack of compassion daily in schools. These pressures may be from both internal and external influences where educators are charged with nurturing the social-emotional well-being of students. Learning is more apt to take place, according to Riley in 2018, if students are encouraged and taught to exercise empathy, regulate emotions, and

self-advocate throughout life. Restorative justice can provide a solid foundation in these skills (Riley, 2018).

Intervention approaches to reduce exclusion

Some schools have interventions in place to help reduce school exclusions or suspensions and may include mentoring, monitoring, counseling, and targeted skill-training for teachers. However, reports show these interventions only have temporary effects on reducing exclusion (Valdebenito et al., 2018). Summarized information, according to Valdebenito et al in 2018, from studies found in 37 reports covering nine different interventions in schools. Thirty-three of these schools were in the United States, three were in the United Kingdom, and the location of one study was unknown as reported by the authors. The total review included results from evaluated studies of school-based or school-supported interventions targeting children ages 4 to 18. Students were randomly chosen, irrespective of social background or nationality. Studies included in the review dated up to 2015, and the report was published in 2018. The school-based interventions led to a small, yet significant drop in the rates of exclusion on average during the first 6 months, but the results did not last long. Interventions and alternatives worked for a short period and then no longer affected students' behaviors. The most affected areas included in-school suspension (ISS) and expulsions (Valdebenito et al., 2018). A study conducted in Pittsburgh Public Schools with 44 students in K-12 indicated restorative justice decreased student suspension rates (Augustine et al., 2018).

A common program in schools is referred to as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Other school districts have a variation of school-wide (PBIS). Each school develops common rules and consequences used throughout the school focusing on positive reinforcements. Nese and McIntosh (2016) reported a study where a form of the school-wide

(PBIS) program used a check-in, check-out procedure for students having behavioral difficulties in school. The student would be assigned to an adult mentor in the school. A teacher or other staff member (secretary, bus driver, or cafeteria worker), serving as the mentor would make contact at various times during the day, especially at the beginning of the school day, to make sure the student had what was needed for school and to offer encouraging words. Time was taken at the end of the day or week for sharing feedback on the student's progress. Teachers and mentors share student progress, academic and behavioral, in an informal report sent home with the student for parents. Usually, all parties sign off on the report, which is returned to school with the student. Rewards may be available. Although some prefer not to provide incentives for students to behave as expected, rewards usually lead to improved results (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). The rewards may be stickers, pencils, a "no homework pass," or a parent taking the child to a favorite store.

Other interventions and alternative practices may decrease discipline issues with students. Some of these practices focus on individual students, groups of students, or school-wide efforts (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). These practices are preventative, and proactive practices have reduced office discipline referrals and improved school climates (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). Additional practices include school survival groups meeting after school for discussions on social cognitive behaviors. Jean-Pierre and Parris-Drummond (2018) reported games and scripted lessons were used to explore motivations and cognitive processes to enhance problem-solving skills and self-control. Conflict-resolution skills training could teach students how to resolve conflicts by training both parties to listen and engage in dialogue and negotiations (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). These lessons could be held throughout the school year, during whole-class sessions, in small groups, or individually. Often, similar

training and sessions took place after a student was suspended from school and were part of the requirements for returning to regular classrooms (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018).

Finally, comprehensive school counseling programs allowed students to acquire self-regulation skills through the exploration of emotions, positive reinforcements, motives, and consequences of behaviors in group counseling sessions or individually (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

The focus of the study was to seek the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and in-school suspension (ISS) monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. School suspensions, both ISS and out-of school suspensions (OSS), along with expulsions are termed exclusionary discipline practices, where students' punishments include being excluded from regular instruction at the school. The study was designed to understand the perceptions of classroom teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors on the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions.

Topics discussed in the literature review included the transitions of discipline practices over time, the rationale for school suspensions, restorative justice, zero tolerance, and school suspensions on the elementary level. Most literature has been conducted on the middle and high school levels, although exclusionary discipline practices are used on all levels, including elementary schools. A major portion of the information for the literature review led to discussions about disparities in the usage of exclusionary discipline practices. The literature review shared what the data have revealed about racial disparities in disciplinary practices and reforms to alleviate the inequalities among students disciplined. During the literature search

process, limited study reports were found on the specifics of what teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors think about suspensions. The literature review concluded with information from studies on the impact suspensions may have on the future workforce and a discussion on alternatives and recommendations for reducing exclusionary discipline practices and racial disparities in student discipline.

Eliminating school suspensions is an improbable cure for inappropriate behaviors and is unlikely to take place without other changes to support student outcomes. Alternatives to suspensions would need to integrate early interventions and preventions (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). Along with restorative justice, school-wide initiatives have been shown to transform and reduce negative discipline practices in schools. The culture of exclusionary discipline continues to be a complex situation with support and opposition as to the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Provided in Chapter 3 are a description of the study design, the procedures, and the population for the study. Additionally, Chapter 3 includes a description of the instruments used in collecting the data and the process for the data analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Warning systems are present in educational settings serving as useful predictors of students dropping out of school; such predictors include course performance, attendance rates, and behavior records (Lovelace et al., 2018). Behavior records include school suspensions (Lovelace et al., 2018). Suspension may or may not change students' negative behaviors. Two types of school suspensions are out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and in-school suspensions (ISS). Students are required to report to a supervised designated area or classroom within the school to complete assignments for in-school suspensions (Stalker, 2018). Students are in the ISS location for the entire school day, with only designated restroom and lunch breaks (Stalker, 2018). Students in OSS are not allowed on school properties for a designated time. The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions.

Studies have reported no proof of suspensions changing or correcting student behaviors; instead, suspensions have been shown to adversely impact students' reading ability, college entrance scores, and dropout rates (Kirkman et al., 2016). The ideal situation in a student's daily learning would be for them to follow directions and the classroom rules while learning (Kirkman et al., 2016). Students would learn and not disrupt the classroom or school climate (Kirkman et al., 2016). In an ideal situation, students would feel safe and work with teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors to end confusion and to engage in learning. While in ISS, these students are away from regular instruction and often are engaged in non-academic activities (Kirkman et al., 2016). In an attempt to influence positive student behavior, school policies should focus on rules and consequences. However, these policies need to strike a

balance between creating orderly campuses, school climates conducive to learning, and student safety and influencing positive student behaviors (Loveless, 2017). Most of the research on school discipline has focused on middle school and high school students (Jacobsen et al., 2016). At the time of the current study, limited study results were available about the perceptions of teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors concerning the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions.

If the current study was not conducted, additional knowledge would not be gained about the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding student suspensions. Suspensions are the most common disciplinary action but are controversial (Cobb-Clark et al., 2015). Although school suspensions are commonly used as discipline measures in elementary, middle, and high schools, most of the research has involved middle and high school level suspensions. This study explored the elementary level of school suspensions and the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors about school-related outcomes related to student suspensions.

As a result of the study, sharing the findings may provide educators and administrators with the impetus to develop new strategies to improve long-term negative student behavior. The study results should contribute to the knowledge base through the data on perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors of the benefits of elementary school suspensions. The information may be shared with other teachers, administrators, district-level staff, parents, students, and community members through informational meetings, and written or technological means.

Chapter 3 is the methodology section of the dissertation. Research methodology refers to the knowledge researchers acquire and construct surrounding a certain discipline. The processes

within the methodology should be relevant and rigorous if the study results are to be legitimately accepted (Saracho, 2017). This chapter includes the study's design and rationale for the qualitative study. The information in this chapter includes a description of the role of the observer and procedures along with the population sample descriptions. The instruments used for data collection, data preparation, and data analysis are described. In addition to the instrumentation and data sections, reliability, validity, and ethical procedures are discussed, ending with the chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The basic qualitative study was used to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Exclusionary discipline programs in the form of in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of school suspension (OSS), served as the bounds in this study. In other words, the object of this qualitative study is in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS). Aligned with a basic qualitative research design, the study's population included people directly involved with the study's subject: individuals employed at elementary schools involved with ISS and OSS programs.

Qualitative methods are common with the increase of online communications (Petrescu & Lauer, 2017). These communications may include social media postings, blogs, and product reviews using qualitative tools to analyze the benefits of such media for practitioners and researchers (Petrescu & Lauer, 2017). Qualitative tools beneficial for researchers and practitioners (Petrescu & Lauer, 2017) include interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and observations. Questionnaires and interviews were utilized in this basic qualitative study. Qualitative studies with varying techniques may be beneficial when assessing the meaning of

and describing phenomena (Petrescu & Lauer, 2017). In basic qualitative studies, data collected, as through interviews and questionnaires, are documented and analyzed to construct detailed accounts of what has taken place (Saracho, 2017). A qualitative research method was utilized to obtain the perspectives of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors on the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions through study participants lived personal experiences (Derico, 2017).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher of this study was an elementary school counselor and served in the role of an observer gathering information from the participants. School staff invited to participate in this study were from different school districts. Seven of the participants were associates in education from different schools, and eight of the participants were not previously known. No ethical issues were involved in this study concerning the relationships between the observer and participants. No incentives were offered to the potential participants, further avoiding any ethical issues or conflicts of interest.

The study gathered data regarding the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors about the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Produced text, instead of numerical data outputs, is the product of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers are involved throughout the stages of a study, and interpersonal skills are important in the process (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). The qualitative researcher's role was to collect data from the participants in this study. The teachers and school counselors completed the Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire, and the administrators and ISS monitors completed the Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire.

A smaller sample of three from the group was chosen for the interviews. Participation was slow overall with time constraints in place, and thus the first three participants returning the questionnaires were chosen to be interviewed. The process within the study was to control or manage variables potentially negatively affecting the reliability and validity of data, interpretations, and conclusions. These variables included confidentiality for the participants, and the clarity of the data collection instruments (Sanjari et al., 2014).

Research is the result of the collaboration between the individual seeking informational data and the participants. The role when conducting qualitative research included establishing positive relationships with the participants and demonstrating strong interpersonal skills (Roger et al., 2018). Qualitative research in education may consist of creative methods of representing information with efforts of making the data more powerful, more real, and more alive (Cousik, 2014). Each participant was asked to volunteer to answer items on the questionnaire; additionally, a smaller sample was asked to voluntarily participate in an interview. No coercion, incentives, or pressure was used to encourage participation. The use of interviews contributed to reliability and validity by allowing additional questioning with a smaller sample from the participants. The interviews helped to clarify and understand responses; interview participants could ask questions for clarity.

Research Procedures

The procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the American College of Education. The study's school district superintendent and building administrators were contacted and provided permission to approach the potential participants to gather data for the study initially. Approval was granted in an amendment to the IRB requesting counselors as

additional participants. The addition of counselors was appropriate based on their first-hand knowledge of both in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of school suspensions (OSS).

Population and Sample Selection

Members of the targeted population included regular education teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and later, school counselors from different districts. All participants had experience with ISS and OSS; thus, could speak to their perceptions of the phenomena being studied. Ten elementary teachers were invited to participate: two from each grade level, grades 1–5, for a total of 50. In addition, one administrator and one ISS monitor were asked to take part in the study, for a potential total of 10. The overall number of potential participants was 60. The questionnaires were from the final sample of 15: three administrators, one ISS monitor, four teachers, and seven counselors. Due to lack of initial participation, the IRB application was amended to include school counselors invited through the American School Counselors' Association e-mail list. School counselors are an appropriate population for this basic qualitative study involving ISS and OSS. Therefore, some participating school counselors ($n = 6$) were from outside the original study district.

The sampling strategy used was purposeful sampling. This method is used for selecting and identifying groups of individuals or individuals who are knowledgeable about or have experience with a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). The process has been noted for the importance of individuals' willingness to participate and the availability of participants. Purposeful sampling was used to maximize efficiency and validity (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The researcher-created study instruments were initially anticipated to be dispersed to the participants via one e-mail with a link to the instruments on SurveyMonkey. Some teachers and the ISS monitor expressed concern about confidentiality through tracking of Internet sources, so

the questionnaires were mailed to participants to be returned in a postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope. Specifically, elementary school teachers and school counselors received the informed consent form (see Appendix A) and the Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire (see Appendix B). Administrators and ISS monitors received the informed consent form (Appendix C) and the Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire (see Appendix D). An e-mail was sent to invited potential participants to take part in the study. The study and its purpose were explained in detail.

A smaller sample of three participants, one administrator and two counselors, from the overall group participated in the subsequent interviews. The interview invitation and questions (see Appendix E) were dispersed to a smaller sample of participants via e-mail, and transcripts were delivered. For questionnaire participants, the informed consent form included a question asking if participants would be willing to participate in an interview. Following data collection for the questionnaires, the observer followed up with those indicating interest. Qualitative researchers may choose small samples from a larger population choosing those participants who are most eligible to provide accurate information (Othman & Hamid, 2018).

Invitations for the teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors to participate were dispersed to potential participants at each of the five elementary schools. The total number of invitations was 60. Criteria for participants chosen by the observer were school participants who had worked at least one full year in an elementary school and school participants who worked in schools where in-school suspensions (ISS) or out-of school suspensions(OSS), or both, were utilized as consequences for negative behaviors. School participants were not selected if both criteria were not met. The school counselors were invited in the same manner as the other participants, via e-mail.

Instrumentation

Two types of instruments were used in this study. The teachers and counselors participated in the same questionnaire. The administrators and ISS monitors utilized another questionnaire. The two questionnaires asked the same questions, with one exception; the administrator and ISS monitor questionnaire asked, “Do you think school suspension programs are changing student behaviors?” The informed consent forms included an area for participants to indicate interest in interviews, and the first three individuals indicating interest were interviewed.

Researchers of qualitative studies could use data recording instruments of protocol, but qualitative researchers usually do not rely on surveys or questionnaires created by other researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative researchers are important to the study as the observers, and usually the focus is on open-ended questioning specific to a context or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Questionnaires and interviews developed by the author addressed four sources included in the target population: teachers, administrators, counselors, and ISS monitors. The questions and items on the instruments were developed based on the author’s experiences in the educational field.

Several instruments were reviewed from other studies similar by topic, particularly the data instrument, “ISS Survey for School Staff” utilized by Rimes (2012) and “Discipline Metaphor Survey” used by Sadik (2017). None of the data collection instruments included items relating directly to this study’s research questions. Both the Rimes and Sadik instruments included items that did not relate to this study’s topic and did not include teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and school counselors. Sadik used a survey and a questionnaire on student perceptions of discipline, but not specifically suspensions. Rimes focused on teacher and

administrator perceptions of ISS only, along with student behaviors and academic success.

Rimes used a quantitative Likert-type survey rather than a qualitative open-ended questionnaire to gain in-depth data.

Six subject-matter experts were asked to review the data collection instruments and provided feedback for each instrument (see Appendices F and G). Feedback included minor changes in sentence structure and rearrangements to improve the flow. The feedback helped improve and clarify the construction of instrument items before the actual study participants were asked to complete the questionnaires (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). All feedback was utilized in the final documents. A consultation was held with one of the six subject-matter experts, with an earned doctorate, who was familiar with developing survey questions in the education and counseling fields. The letter for the expert review of the instruments and information about the subject-matter experts were included in Appendices F and G. Validity is considered present if a data collection instrument measures what the instrument has been claimed to measure (Bastos, Duquia, Gonzalez-Chica, Mesa, & Bonamigo, 2014). A research instrument, in general, is considered reliable if the instrument produces the same results time after time after repeated use in a group of participants (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015).

All data collection instruments in this study were original. The instrument items were developed to correlate with the research questions (see Tables 1 and 2). Initial items, such as the demographic information, on the questionnaire regarding years of experience, for example, were offered to ease the participants into the questionnaire with respectful, easy-to-answer questions.

Table 1

Relationship of Research Questions to Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire Questions

Research question	Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire questions	Rationale for question
1. How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and in-school suspension (ISS) monitors perceive benefits of ISS and out-of-school suspension (OSS) programs in elementary schools?	3. What reasons are most students suspended for?	Participants can share behaviors leading to suspension.
	4. What do you perceive as the benefits of ISS programs in elementary schools?	Participants can share perceptions of suspensions, both ISS and OSS, as beneficial.
	6. What do you perceive as the benefits of OSS suspension programs in elementary schools?	
2. How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?	5. What do you perceive as limitations of ISS programs in elementary schools? 7. What do you perceive as limitations of OSS programs in elementary schools?	Participants can share what participants have witnessed or experienced with other colleagues about limitations of suspension programs.

All questionnaire items were brief, helping to ensure ease of answering for the study participants. As with some questionnaires, the items were open-ended questions allowing for extended responses in the respondent's own words.

Table 2

Relationship of Research Questions to Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire Questions

Research question	Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire questions	Rationale for question
1. How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and in-school suspension (ISS) monitors perceive benefits of ISS and out-of-school suspension (OSS) programs in elementary schools?	4. Describe the main reasons students are assigned OSS and ISS.	Participants can share behaviors leading to suspension.
	3. Do you think school suspension programs are changing student behaviors? Explain.	Participants can share any perceptions of suspensions, both ISS and OSS, as beneficial.
	5. Please share your perceptions about the benefits of ISS in elementary schools. 7. Please share your perceptions about the benefits of OSS in elementary schools.	
2. How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?	6. Please share your perceptions about the limitations of ISS in elementary schools.	Participants can share what participants have witnessed or experienced with other colleagues about limitations of suspension programs.
	8. Please share your perceptions about the limitations of OSS in elementary schools.	

Data Collection

The employees from the first five elementary schools on the district's website listings were reviewed to ensure none of the employees were familiar to the researcher. The superintendent and school administrators were contacted to gain permission to contact the participants. Once permission was obtained and following American College of Education's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval, the elementary school teachers, school counselors, ISS monitors, and administrators were contacted via e-mail and U.S. mail and invited to take part in the study. The messages contained information about the study, the informed consent form, and a link to the data collection instrument along with contact information for any questions.

Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire. SurveyMonkey was planned to be used to send out the questionnaires to the participants. Participants were concerned Internet use

would reveal participants' identities and preferred to use paper questionnaires. Completed questionnaires were returned via the U.S. Postal Service in a prepaid, pre-addressed envelope. The Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire (see Appendix B) included two multiple-choice items regarding experience and education. The final six questions were open-ended.

The questionnaire included just eight items to encourage participants to take time and not rush. It is possible for the data collection process to be impacted by the length of the data collection instrument; thus, the questionnaires were brief. Participants might develop discomfort with a lengthy questionnaire and might rush through, providing information not useful to the study (Rimando et al., 2015). Any participants with questions who wished to speak on the phone with the data collector were given the opportunity. None of the participants contacted the researcher. The questionnaire results were collected during and up to the given deadline of about two weeks.

The data responses collected were reviewed to develop codes. Frequent sentences, phrases, and words were labeled and coded. Table 1 shows the relationship between the Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire items and research questions.

Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire. The Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire included one multiple-choice item asking about years of experience; the second question was open-ended and asked the individual's title at the school. The remaining questions were open-ended. Completed questionnaires were returned via the U.S. Postal Service in a prepaid, pre-addressed envelope. Table 2 shows the relationship between the Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire items and research questions.

Interviews. The interview questions included information connected to the two main research questions. A semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions was used.

Responses were recorded using the voice recording application on a cellular phone with a voice-to-text feature for future reference and transcription. Interviews are often used to elicit detailed qualitative data assisting in understanding the experiences of study participants and the meanings and perceptions participants make of experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Table 3 shows the relationship between the interview questions and research questions.

Table 3

Relationship of Research Questions to Interview Questions

Research question	Interview question	Rationale for question
1. How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and in-school suspension (ISS) monitors perceive benefits of ISS and out-of-school suspension (OSS) programs in elementary schools?	4. Describe what you perceive as benefits of ISS or OSS.	Participants can share any perceptions of ISS as beneficial.
	7. Describe what effects you think school suspensions have on improving student negative behaviors.	Participants can share any perceptions of suspensions as beneficial.
	10. Describe what you perceive as the benefits of ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools.	Question is specific to elementary schools.
2. How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?	5. Describe what you perceive as limitations of ISS or OSS.	Participants can share perceived limitations.
	6. Describe what you think could improve school suspension programs.	Participants can offer suggestions to correct current limitations.
	8. Tell me whether you think school suspensions improve or have NO effect on the behaviors of students who are NOT being suspended. Why or why not?	Participants can share more specific thoughts about school suspensions.
	11. Describe what school staff perceive as limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools.	Participants can share what participants have witnessed or experienced with other colleagues about whether suspensions have limitations.

Data Preparation

The data preparation process began with collecting copies of the informed consent forms and the questionnaires from the participants. The informed consent forms were reviewed for signatures and to see whether the participant indicated an interest in an interview. Blank questionnaires were used to manually write in participants' responses, and then the responses

were typed in a Word document for easier reading. Responses were grouped accordingly, and themes developed.

The data source instruments included questionnaires and interviews. Multiple copies were printed, e-mailed, and made available to participants. These instruments were sent to the participants via U.S. Postal Service with a prepaid, pre-addressed envelope for questionnaire return. Only the researcher knew the names of the recruited participants. Up to 50 education teachers and school counselors could have participated in answering the Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire. The final number was 11 teachers and counselors participating. Up to 10 administrators and ISS monitors could have participated in completing the Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire. The final number was three administrators and one ISS monitor. A smaller sample of three participants took part in the interviews. Participants had the researcher's contact information for questions at any time. Qualitative studies often utilize recordings of collected data to transcribe the information (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). The responses for the questionnaire for this basic qualitative study were handwritten on the questionnaire and entered during analysis into a Microsoft Word document. Interview responses were recorded on an electronic device and played back for transcribing for written accuracy. All of the items for the data collection instruments, questionnaires, and interview items were prepared in a Microsoft Word document.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded using a cellular phone with a voice-to-text feature. The recordings were compared with the voice-to-text transcriptions. The interviewees were provided with the transcriptions for member checking and confirmation of accurate accounts of the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). No interviewees asked for changes in the transcripts.

The responses from the participants were sorted using Microsoft Word. Thematic analysis was used for the systematic coding of qualitative data using categories or themes (Dinçer, 2018). Data gathered were coded based on the information received through the instrument items and then systemically divided into categories and or themes (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Common threads of information were sorted and grouped with like information. Codes were developed to extract data based on the research questions and the questions within the data collection instruments.

One qualitative method of analyzing data is thematic analysis. The thematic analysis framework provided useful core skills needed for conducting other types of analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clark's six-step framework, developed in 2006, has been influential in the social sciences to assist in identifying themes or patterns of interesting and important issues in the data. The six-phase framework for conducting a thematic analysis included (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining themes, and (f) writing up findings (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Interview responses were transcribed verbatim and then coded to reduce larger amounts of data into smaller chunks or themes. Common responses continuing to surface in the participants' responses were coded based on reoccurring responses relative to the research questions. This information was categorized based on similarity.

This coding process of the data in the study was part of the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis with constant comparison, more specifically, began with the data collection. Data analyzed from the first participant's response were compared to subsequent participants' responses, and so on, as data were collected, with the analysis constantly moving back and forth between data previously collected, analyzed, and arranged into patterns or themes. The patterns

or themes changed as the process of analysis continued (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). A step-by-step process in thematic analysis with constant comparison has been described in the paragraph below.

Initial data were reviewed and collected to become familiar with the data collected from each participant. The data were highlighted in the documents after being printed. Phrases, words, and sentences which appeared meaningful about the research questions were highlighted. This information was sorted to highlight more meaningful data. Each set of data was named or given a code. Similar connected data were clustered together for the development of patterns or themes. This process was completed with each data collection instrument, questionnaires and surveys, from each participant. Data responses were processed, analyzed, compared, and contrasted for the final compilation of the study results (Percy et al., 2015).

Participants were assigned a number and letter based on the job description. For example, A1 was the first administrator and A2 was the next administrator; T1 was the first teacher. The coding was necessary to manage the data and protect the confidentiality of the participants. Hard copies of the data are secured in a locked file cabinet for confidentiality. All data will be safely stored on a hard drive, in paper files, and on a portable drive for 60 months as suggested by Creswell & Creswell, 2018. Electronic storage of all documentation is password protected. Upon completion of the instruments, the questionnaire participants did not need to do anything else. The participants will be contacted later with the study results.

The data were hand-coded using tables. Microsoft Word and Excel, which were used in this study, are examples of general-purpose spreadsheets and tables to develop all-inclusive tables and charts of data, which may undergo several revisions to prepare more concise data (Watkins, 2017). The technique converted raw qualitative data into more user-friendly and

manageable data (Watkins, 2017). Manual coding allowed for more focus on the content data and less on the technical complexity required to use a detailed qualitative computer software program (Watkins, 2017). For inexperienced researchers with smaller samples, Saldaña (2015) recommended manual coding, rather than having to become familiar with coding techniques while learning how to navigate a complex software program. Categories or common themes were assigned as the answers to the questions were sorted. The data segments were sorted and compiled into separate lists. The responses were typed into Microsoft Word.

Each questionnaire was reviewed several times to extract data and make detailed notes. Questionnaire responses from the participants were handwritten on the hard copies received in the mail, then typed by the researcher into a blank template identical to the document participants used. The process of coding identified topics, participants, or issues differing in nature revealed through participants' responses to the data collection instruments. Coding enables a researcher to begin an understanding of the world, or topic of discussion, through the participants' perspectives (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Connecting codes or similar information from participants' responses in meaningful ways is referred to as theming (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The codes and themes led to categorizing information or data findings related to the research questions (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Categories and codes are both semantic, based on respondents' actual words or terminology, and conceptual, based on the meaning behind phrases and responses (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Coding is a way or process helping to organize the data by breaking the responses into smaller pieces, words, or chunks of text and then writing words or phrases representing categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). From this process, themes were generated as descriptions of the participants' responses. Themes are the major findings in qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These themes were reported as the

findings and described in the narratives in a written document. The data were analyzed as described above, revealing clear themes across the group of participants.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are vital components in qualitative research; reliability is the consistency in the research, and validity refers to the trustworthiness of studies. The gathering, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data may include interviews, diaries, journals, observations, and open-ended questions (Zohrabi, 2013). This study included questionnaires and interviews. Components were included to ensure reliability and validity.

Member checking helps ensure trustworthiness and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants verified responses for clarity and accuracy (Chase, 2017). The transcripts from the interview were shared with each participant to ensure responses were correctly recorded interpretations. Study participants reviewed personal transcribed responses for accuracy. If participants did not respond with any changes within 10 days, the transcription was assumed to be accurate.

Using multiple methods of data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena is referred to as triangulation and was utilized (Carter, Bryant-Lukasius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). One type of triangulation involves using multiple methods in collecting data, including questionnaires and interviews as with this study. Triangulation of data increases the dependability of the findings by helping to ensure validity and reliability (Zohrabi, 2013). Individuals should be careful not to misinterpret data and use triangulation techniques to increase validity and reliability (Dooly, Moore, & Vallejo, 2017). To support triangulation, two types of data collection were used: questionnaires and interviews. An additional form of triangulation is the use of multiple groups of individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), in this -

study, teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors were included as distinct groups.

A limitation of the study was the use of researcher-developed instruments. Original instruments had not been validated in previous studies. Subject-matter experts examined the instruments before the study and shared concerns or questions regarding validity or clarity.

Ethical Procedures

This study followed the guidelines outlined by the American College of Education's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The National Institute of Health is another group with guidelines set up similar to the IRB. Questions of ethics arise in qualitative research in educational content, especially if human subjects are involved (Dooly et al., 2017).

All participants in this study were over 18 years of age. No participants in the study were coerced to take part. The identities of the participants were not shared with any outsiders other than the data collector. Participants were assigned a letter and number for tracking throughout the study, such as T1 for the first teacher. Informed consent forms with information about potential risks involved, participants' rights, procedures, and confidentiality statements were shared with the participants.

Additional ethical questions considered included whether or not the participants would be exposed to risks and the possibility of harm. The goal was to do no harm, to not subject participants to adverse effects, and to ensure confidentiality and privacy (Dooly et al., 2017). Study participants were informed about the details of the study. The participants' identities were not to be revealed to others. Informed consent forms were collected from all participants and filed in a locked cabinet. Participants were reassured of no harmful risks resulting from taking part in the study and reassured of other protocols through the IRB's approval. All forms and

letters were submitted for IRB approval. Records of information and data will be kept on file for five years and then destroyed.

Qualitative research could involve unintended consequences or ethical dilemmas requiring reassuring the participants of confidentiality and trust (Othman & Hamid, 2018). Informed consent forms with written explanations of the basic qualitative study, time frames to follow, benefits, and possible harms noted, along with the study's design, objectives, and well-written procedures, were available to participants. Signed consent forms were collected from the participants, with copies made available to each participant if requested. Confidentiality was explained, stressed, and enforced. Participants' names were not disclosed ensuring confidentiality because the instruments were anonymous. The names of the districts and schools were not disclosed, either. Participant anonymity will be protected when information is shared with others, as in the dissertation report. Communications with participants were via e-mail, telephone calls, and conferences as needed or requested.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the basic qualitative study with a problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, study design, and methodology. The topic and main research question for this project pertained to the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Suspensions are common punishments for students who fail to follow school rules. Students are missing instruction when suspended from schools, and the perceptions of teachers, school counselors, administrators, and suspension monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions were unknown. Many teachers and principals

are proponents of suspensions; parents, civil rights groups, and child advocacy groups are known opponents of suspensions (Cobb-Clark et al., 2015).

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, ISS monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. This basic qualitative study permitted a qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors to be shared and analyzed. The significance of the study was the findings could reveal insights from elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Continued research is necessary to determine the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Chapter 4 includes the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

Suspensions, included in disciplinary consequences, are used as tools by teachers and administrators for classroom management in response to student misbehavior (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2019). The problem was elementary school students are disciplined using in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of school suspension (OSS); however, school personnel's perceptions about the benefits and limitations of school suspensions are unknown. To address the problem, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. This study was guided by two research questions.

Research Question One: How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive the benefits of ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?

Research Question Two: How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive the limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?

Data Collection

Initially, following American College of Education's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval in October 2019, multiple school district superintendents were contacted via e-mail with the purpose of the study along with a copy of the informed consent forms (see Appendices A and C). Eight school district superintendents were contacted, but only one permitted contact with district employees. School district leaders were reluctant to take part due to the pending legal issues in various schools and districts and for issues with job security or assignment. One district leader's letter declining participation stated not being able to participate for legal reasons. Two district leaders responded via e-mail, indicating a desire to participate but being unable to

do so due to discipline issues in the district. Information about the pending legal issues was confirmed through public media, television newscasts, and online articles.

The goal of the study was to collect data from a targeted population of 60 participants: elementary school teachers, administrators, counselors, and ISS monitors. A district with five elementary schools was targeted initially to gain participation from 10 teachers, two per grade level for grades 1-5 for a total of 50 teachers. Another 10 participants targeted were administrators and ISS monitors, one of each from each of the five schools.

A surprising revelation was many educators were reluctant to voice their true perceptions. Some educators shared reasons for not participating in an e-mail. Collecting the data for the study began as a slow process. Sixty employees in the targeted population were contacted, but only a few responded. A few responses were not used because no signed consent forms were returned with the questionnaires. An approved amendment to the IRB process in December 2019 allowed the expansion of participants to school counselors. After five months and the expansion of the initial study group from administrators, ISS monitors, and teachers to include school counselors, responses began to come in by the sixth month. Teachers and ISS monitors were the most reluctant to participate. School counselors were the most willing to take part in the study. Four school counselors were from the initial study district. Three school counselors were respondents from the American School Counselors' Association e-mail list and had worked in schools in other counties in the same state.

The final number of participants was 15, or 25% of the original targeted number of participants. Of 50 potential teachers, only four (8%) participated. Three of the five administrators (60%) participated. Out of the five ISS monitors, only one (20%) participated.

Without the inclusion of school counselors, participation would have been too low. Table 4 shows the characteristics of the sample.

Table 4

Characteristics of Study Sample

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	% of sample
Job type		
School counselor	7	46.7
Teacher	4	26.7
Administrator	3	20.0
In-school-suspension monitor	1	6.7
Years of experience		
20+ years	6	40.0
5–10 years	5	33.3
Less than 5 years	4	26.7

Research experts of qualitative studies have argued no specific number of participants are needed in a sample (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018). The number should depend on several factors such as qualitative sample sizes being large enough to allow for new and rich understandings of the study phenomenon while being small enough for deep, case-oriented analysis of data (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The more usable data collected from each participant, the fewer participants needed for a qualitative study, as with this study (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Palys (2008) noted one articulate participant may be more useful than a sample of 50. Creswell (2012) noted a qualitative sample may be a single individual, four to 10 in a case study, or more, depending on the type and context of the study. Qualitative samples are often small and relevant to the topic being researched.

Fifteen participants returned questionnaires. Of those participants, three agreed to be interviewed (an administrator and two counselors). The informed consent forms included an area under “Research Design and Procedures” where participants could indicate if they would be

willing to participate in an interview. Questionnaires and interview questions in this study were researcher-produced. All instrument items correlated with the research questions and were designed specifically based on the research questions. The initial items on the questionnaires regarding years of experience, for example, not only gathered demographic data but similarly were purposed to offer easily answered items to help participants feel comfortable and recognize participants as professionals.

Data collection consisted of qualitative questionnaires and interviews. The surveys, the Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire (see Appendix B), and the Administrator and ISS Monitor Questionnaire (see Appendix D), were comprised of eight open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E) were comprised of open-ended questions. Six subject-matter experts were asked to review the data collection instruments and provided feedback for each instrument (see Appendices F and G). The feedback helped improve and clarify the items before the actual study participants were asked to complete the questionnaires (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). Additional items included in the appendices are transcribed interview notes (see Appendix H), the permission from the district superintendent to conduct the study (see Appendix I), and invitation e-mails (see Appendix J).

The original plan was to use SurveyMonkey. Printed copies were provided to participants of the informed consent forms along with printed copies of the data collection instruments. Participants were willing to use printed copies instead of using SurveyMonkey and the Internet. Potential respondents shared not being comfortable using digital tools for sharing true perceptions of elementary school suspensions. Participants expressed fear the shared information could somehow be traced back individually via Internet connections, although participants were assured of confidentiality. Teachers and ISS monitors were most hesitant

within the overall group. The informed consent forms and the questionnaires were e-mailed initially and then mailed through the U.S. Postal Service. One participant e-mailed the questionnaires back but later utilized the printed copy provided as no signature was provided on the digital informed consent form returned. The 14 remaining questionnaires and informed consent forms were mailed back in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes provided.

Data Analysis and Results

Interviews were recorded using a cellular phone with a voice-to-text feature. The recordings were compared with the voice-to-text transcriptions, which did not accurately account for every single word. For example, if the word used was *your*, the device replaced the word with *youth*. The inaccuracies in the voice-to-text process did not affect the accuracy or validity of the results. Keeping the inaccuracies in mind, the transcriptions from the recordings were important in the member checking. The changes were made prior to being sent out to the interviewees. The interviewees were provided with the transcriptions for member checking and confirmation of accurate accounts of the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Transcripts were sent via United States mail or hand-delivered. No interviewees asked for changes in the transcripts.

Braun and Clark's six-step framework (as cited in Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) has been influential in the social sciences to assist in identifying themes or patterns of interesting and important issues in the data. The six-phase framework for conducting a thematic analysis was (a) become familiar with the data, (b) generate initial codes, (c) search for themes, (d) review themes, (e) define themes, and (f) write up findings (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Patterns or themes found are usually transcribed and then coded to reduce larger amounts of data into smaller chunks. Common responses continuing to surface in the participants' responses were

coded based on reoccurring responses relative to the research questions. This information was categorized based on similarity.

Each participant received a code for this study. An example of this coding process; the first teacher was coded as T1, the second teacher, T2, the first administrator was referred to as A1. Six overall themes were discovered from the data collections. Themes are the major findings in qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following themes were reported as the findings and described in the narratives in the written document. Out-of school (OSS) and in-school suspensions (ISS) offer benefits as a punitive measure, OSS gets the attention of the parents (since students are at home and not in school), another theme was no benefits were seen with school suspensions, removing disruptive students from class was seen as a benefit, and ISS is more beneficial if in a structured environment.

Results for Research Question One: Benefits of Suspension

The first research question was “How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive the benefits of ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?” To answer this research question, respondents were first asked to describe examples of the criteria for a student to be suspended from school. Fighting and aggressive behaviors were listed most often, along with bullying (see Table 5) as reasons for suspensions. These behaviors warrant immediate removal of students from class or school, thus viewed as beneficial reasons for suspension.

Table 5

Reported Reasons for Elementary School Suspensions

Reason for suspension	<i>n</i>
Fighting, aggressive behaviors	13
Bullying or threats (with or without weapons)	8
Disrespecting staff	7
Accumulation of leveled infractions	4
Stealing	3
Weapons on school grounds (typically pocketknife)	3
Disobedience	2
Disorderly conduct, severe class disruptions	2

Note. $N = 15$.

Questionnaires included questions asking participants about the perceived benefits of in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of school suspensions (OSS). Six themes emerged from responses, Themes 1–6, as shown in Figure 1 and Table 6. Interview responses supported the questionnaire responses with the same or similar replies. For example, the participants responded to the questionnaires with the benefit of both ISS and OSS as the removal of disruptive students from class. The interviewees shared the same in their responses.

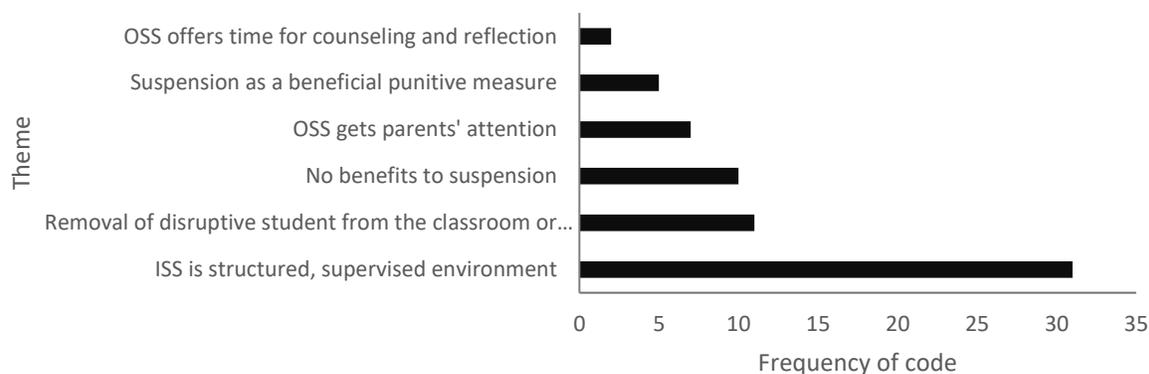


Figure 1. Frequency of themes related to Research Question One: Benefits to elementary school suspension. ISS = in-school suspension; OSS = out-of-school suspension. $N = 15$.

The highest number of responses concerned ISS being a structured, supervised environment, as shown in Figure 1. A high frequency in participants' responses may suggest this factor's importance to elementary school personnel's perceptions about suspensions. A similar response was shared by the participants in the interviews.

Table 6

Themes Related to Benefits of Elementary School Suspension

Theme	<i>n</i>	Subthemes	<i>n</i>
1. In ISS, students can work on classwork and behavior in a structured, supervised school environment	35	Students can continue with schoolwork	11
		Student is supervised	12
		Better alternative to OSS	4
		Time for improving behavior and character, reflecting	4
		Better alternative to OSS; no "free day" and parents' schedules uninterrupted	4
2. The disruptive student is removed from the classroom or school environment.	11	OSS: Removal of student from classroom and school environment	6
		Both ISS and OSS provide time out for teachers and classmates	5
3. Suspension has no benefits.	10	No benefits to either ISS or OSS	5
		No benefits to OSS	4
		No benefits to ISS	1
4. OSS gets parents' attention.	7		
5. Suspension can be a beneficial punitive measure.	5	OSS as a punitive measure to set an example and decrease repeat offenders	3
		ISS as a punitive measure to decrease repeat offenders	2
6. OSS offers time for counseling and reflection.	2		

Note. *N* = 15. ISS = in-school suspension; OSS = out-of-school suspension. Frequencies represent number of mentions by questionnaire and interview respondents.

Theme 1: In ISS, students can work on classwork and behavior in a structured, supervised school environment. The dominant theme was noted 31 times as Theme 1: in ISS, students can work on classwork and behavior in a structured, supervised school environment.

During ISS, students can complete schoolwork. Administrator 1 and Teacher 4 noted students

could reflect on behavior, and Counselor 4 noted an opportunity for “character building.” Counselor 2 noted during ISS, teachers and administrators “can encourage positive behaviors,” and “students who are struggling academically get help.” Four participants noted the benefit of ISS was simply an alternative to OSS, whereas students did not get a “free day at home,” and parents’ work schedules were not interrupted. Teacher 4 elaborated, “I believe that an organized, well-structured in-school suspension program can be very beneficial. One of the benefits is students can continue their academic studies and not fall behind. ISS provides an opportunity for students to reflect on behaviors.”

Theme 2: The disruptive student is removed from the classroom and school environment. Six respondents noted a benefit of OSS was the removal of the student from the classroom and school (see Table 6). Counselor 4 noted the lack of room or space for ISS was not a problem with OSS. Interviewee 1, a counselor, described, “We have had first graders destroying classrooms, throwing chairs, pushing over desks, tossing books and papers around. This becomes a safety issue. These students are sent home immediately.” Although Interviewee 1 stated OSS had no “overall” benefits, “some disruptive students have to be put out of the classroom.” Interviewee 2, a counselor, confirmed, “ISS and OSS immediately get the student with the negative behaviors away from the other students who are following the rules.”

Additionally, respondents described both ISS and OSS as a “time out” for both teachers and classmates away from the disruptive students. Interviewee 3, an administrator, said the suspension “[ISS/OSS] takes out disruptive students. [ISS/OSS] helps other students feel safe if there is fighting. Teachers and staff, even bus drivers get a break from disruptive students.” The administrator added, “With some students, the entire classroom climate changes to positive with a suspension.” Interviewee 1 stated, “If parents do not help the situation, hearings can be held at

the district level requiring counseling. Schools have to have some type of reprieve for constant negative student behaviors.”

Theme 3: Suspension has no benefits. Ten responses indicated participants found no benefits to either OSS or ISS, but OSS in particular (see Table 6). Administrator 1 noted younger students “may not fully understand being out of school” during OSS, whereas on the elementary level, suspensions do not work well. Counselor 7 noted not having seen any data concerning whether school suspensions of elementary students were favorable. Interviewee 2, a counselor, said, “Do we really know how well ISS or OSS works for a school overall? There needs to be more data kept on this—students are missing instruction with both ISS and OSS.” Three administrators responded suspensions do not change student behaviors.

Theme 4: OSS gets parents’ attention. Seven responses reflected OSS “makes parents more accountable” (Counselor 3), “gets parents’ attention” (Administrator 1 and Teacher 4), and encourages parents to “take more responsibility” (Administrator 3 and Counselor 4) for child behaviors. Parents get official notification about behaviors, and usually, an OSS garners more attention from parents than an ISS. Elementary school students often are placed in ISS because parents cannot be reached during school hours. With OSS, parents are required to come to the school the day OSS begins and return with the student before the student is allowed back to class. Teacher 1 said, “[OSS] makes parents take a look at behavior. Sometimes it causes parents to partner more with the school to be proactive.” Respondents suggested parents having to miss work would lead to parents taking more responsibility for disruptive students. Interviewee 1, a counselor, said, “The programs and family situations where students are faced with consequences see students improving behaviors more often.”

Theme 5: Suspension can be a beneficial punitive measure. Two respondents noted a benefit of OSS was setting an example for other students (see Table 6). Interviewee 2, a counselor, confirmed, “OSS students sometimes need to know the negative behaviors will not be tolerated sometimes make them an example to others so they won’t do the same thing.” Counselor 2 noted ISS and OSS reduce the chance of repeat offenders. Teacher 3 suggested after-school ISS may work better, as students do not want to stay after school and picking up students inconveniences parents. A counselor, Interviewee 1, said, “Some students work hard to not get assigned to ISS or OSS again.” Interviewee 2 said, “It depends on the students. Some never want to be in ISS or OSS again. Some do not care if they are or not.” An administrator, Interviewee 3, said suspensions remind those students not suspended “they do not want to be suspended, so they are careful to not misbehave.”

Theme 6: OSS offers time for counseling and reflection. Only two respondents reported the minor theme, Theme 6 (see Table 6). Administrator 1 indicated a benefit of OSS was the “student has time to reflect on inappropriate behaviors.” Another participant, Administrator 1, said during OSS, students can “possibly secure outside counseling.” Administrator 2 noted parents need to work with schools to achieve the counseling benefit.

Results for Research Question Two: Limitations of Suspension

How do teachers, school counselors, administrators, and ISS monitors perceive limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools? Four main themes emerged from the data, Themes 7–10, as shown in Figure 2 and Table 7. Frequencies of responses indicating themes and subthemes are presented in Table 7.

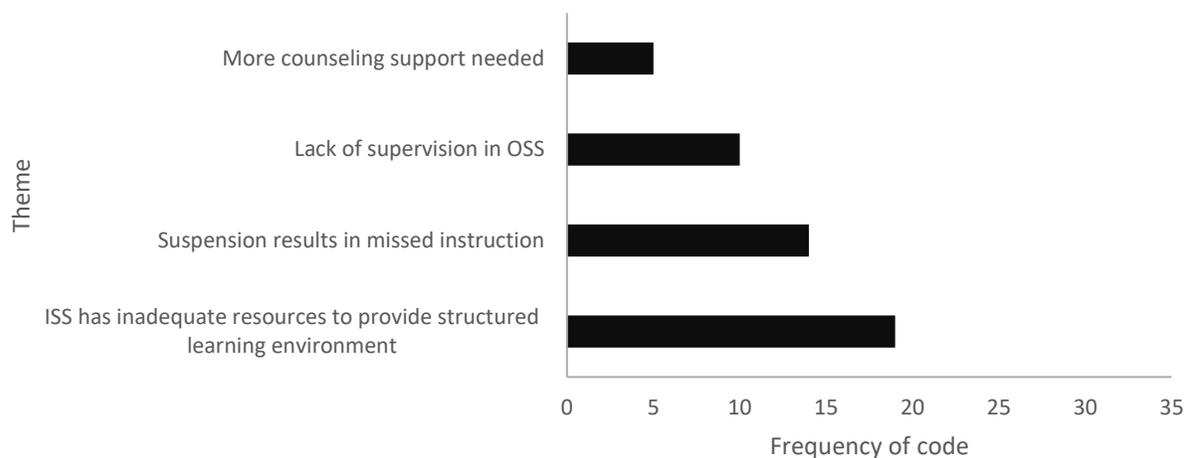


Figure 2. Frequency of themes related to Research Question Two: Limitations to elementary school suspension. ISS = in-school suspension; OSS = out-of-school suspension. $N = 15$.

Themes and subthemes are displayed in Figure 2. The figure provides more details relating to the limitations of elementary school suspensions. Although deemed important by the participants, fewer responses pertained to students who are suspended needing counseling. Schools not having adequate resources for structured learning environments during certain times, as with ISS, was noted most often.

Table 7

Themes Related to Limitations of Elementary School Suspension

Theme	<i>n</i>	Subthemes	<i>n</i>
7. ISS has inadequate resources to provide a structured learning environment for elementary students.	19	ISS has inadequate staff and space for young students	10
		ISS is not structured or supervised properly, allowing students to sleep	6
		ISS unappealing to monitors	3
8. Suspension results in missed instruction.	14	OSS: Missed instruction, leading to students falling behind academically	9
		ISS prevents instruction	5
9. Lack of supervision in OSS does not improve behavior.	3	OSS lack of supervision	3
10. More counseling support is needed to improve student behavior.	5		

Note. *N* = 15. ISS = in-school suspension; OSS = out-of-school suspension. Frequencies represent number of mentions by questionnaire and interview respondents.

Theme 7: ISS has inadequate resources to provide a structured learning environment for elementary students. An overwhelming theme mentioned by all respondents was ISS lacks the resources to provide a structured learning environment for young students (see Table 7). Qualified personnel were lacking, and respondents noted young children need direct academic support. A full day of ISS will not work for all students or young students. Teacher 4 and Counselor 5 described how too many students in ISS lead to distractions. Teacher 4 elaborated, “An organized, well-structured in-school suspension program can be very beneficial. An ineffectively run program with too many students often results in the students feeding off each other’s negative behaviors.” One subtheme was a lack of proper structure in ISS, leading to an environment where students were allowed to sleep. Teacher 2 explained, “Many elementary schools do not have enough adequate staff to cover ISS to provide immediate consequences for behavior.” Counselor 5 stated:

Consequences are required for negative behaviors. Children must be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. One limitation of the ISS is the faculty person who might run the program. A passive employee who struggles with behavior management would not be beneficial.

Additionally, Counselor 4 noted ISS monitors received low pay, and Teacher 1 observed ISS was “tiring” for monitors.

Interviews provided supporting data indicating a need for structure. Interviewee 1, a counselor, explained,

Elementary students need supervision. For ISS, elementary students who are disruptive often need extra help with schoolwork. There are some students who are on track academically, but they need counseling, medication, and structure to improve behaviors—and too often, the extras are not available at schools due to staffing and funding.

An administrator, Interviewee 3 stated,

Qualified staff are needed for ISS. A first grader is going to need more assistance than a fifth-grader, and too often, they are in the same ISS room. Sometimes too many are in one ISS room, so better structured ISS programs are needed.

Theme 8: Suspension results in missed instruction. A theme noted 14 times in responses was suspension results in students missing instructional time (see Table 7). Respondents noted OSS, in particular, leads to missed instruction and a lack of follow-up. Counselor 2 noted this lost instructional time could lead to students falling behind grade level, ultimately contributing to an increase in future dropout rates. Five respondents indicated ISS prevents instruction as well, with Counselor 2 noting ISS results in a “decline in student–teacher

relationships and trust” and a “decline in parent–teacher trust.” Interviewee 2, a counselor suggested, “Schools should provide help with schoolwork during ISS and for make-up work for those in OSS.”

Theme 9: Lack of supervision in OSS does not improve behavior. The main limitation of OSS was the lack of supervision (see Table 7). Respondents noted students away from school due to OSS could get into trouble in the community and associate with others in OSS. Students sometimes treat OSS as a play day. The ISS monitor stated students enjoy OSS. Teacher 3 stated, “ISS is just a nap for the day, and OSS is what they truly want—no school, sleep in, and play video games all day.” Interviewee 2, a counselor, confirmed, “Some students do not care—OSS is a fun day. Some students get to watch TV, play video games and ride four-wheelers—no consequences guaranteed at home.” Counselor 1 noted OSS does not provide “prosocial skills training to assist students with misbehavior.”

Theme 10: More counseling support is needed to improve student behavior. Participants indicated more support was needed from schools to help students deal with behaviors. Counselor 3 stated, “Schools should focus more on behavioral counseling to address the reasons behind negative behaviors.” Student behavior only changes if counseling is provided about reasons behind suspensions. Administrator 1 indicated suspension only changes student behavior with strong parental support and support from schools. Administrator 2 said student behavior only changes if parents are supportive and working with schools as a team. Counselor 5 and Counselor 6 noted the importance of consequences for behavior, yet students learned from student mistakes. Counselor 6 advocated for restorative justice.

Interviews provided considerably more data on the perceived need for more counseling support. A counselor, Interviewee 1, said, “Too often students do not get help or have follow-

ups by professionals, counselors, etc., to help them deal with their behaviors.” Interviewee 1 noted, “In some cases, counseling is available at school, not always if the counselor is part-time. Also, parents may be referred to counseling through an outside agency, but parents do not always follow up.” This counselor concluded, “Students need someone to work with them, figure out the ‘whys’ behind their actions.” Interviewee 2, a counselor, said simply, “Counseling is needed if any student is suspended.”

When asked how to improve school suspension programs, interviewees all indicated more counseling support. Two interviewees recommended counseling as an assessment. Interviewee 2 said, “Teachers, school staff, bus drivers, and administrators have to have some way of dealing with very disruptive students. Students need to be assessed for underlying causes of negative behaviors (home and school life), mental health issues, nutrient deficiencies.” Interviewee 3, an administrator, stated, “Alternatives are needed to assess why students are behaving the way they are and help provided to them and the parents.” To improve student behavior, Interviewee 1 recommended the following:

Suspend students less. Offer counseling to all suspended students, ISS, and OSS.

Provide more support to students and parents (give parents the opportunity to partner with the schools). Let them volunteer and take part in programs where they can learn about discipline issues, policies, and parenting skills to deal with discipline (funding issues may be present).

Interviewee 1 continued, “Students need help with negative behaviors. Counseling at school and through outside agencies.” An administrator, Interviewee 3 concurred, “Too often suspensions of young elementary students do not include counseling, or assistance to parents on why young students are misbehaving.” Interviewee 2, a counselor, recommended behavior programs as an

alternative to suspensions, stating, “Alternatives to suspensions. Some schools use PBIS programs. I like restorative justice. Schools need to learn about different programs to see what works best for their elementary school.” Programs other than suspension are recommended to teach students consequences as well as replace problem behavior with appropriate behavior.

Reliability and Validity

The results from this basic qualitative study were derived from questionnaires and interviews of different groups of educators in elementary schools. Two aspects of all research are reliability and validity (Cypress, 2017). Six subject-matter experts reviewed the data collection instruments and provided feedback before the study began. Feedback from the subject-matter experts helped improve and clarify the instrument items before presented to actual participants. This step helped to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments in the study. According to Johnson and Morgan (2016), a subject-matter expert review of a survey or questionnaire can confirm the measures the construct studied and the language were appropriate, providing content validity.

Validity refers to a data instrument measuring what the instrument was supposed to measure and reliability, meaning the same results were expected time after time. The data instruments were deemed valid by subject-matter experts. Content validity was confirmed, along with predictive or concurrent validity, as the interviews validated the responses in the questionnaires (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and quotes from the interviews increased credibility. Participants were provided the opportunity to comment on interview transcripts. The transcripts included rich, thick verbatim descriptions on the participants’ perspectives as suggested by Nobel & Smith (2015).

Triangulation involved dissimilar types of data collection with participants in various job positions. Different questionnaires and interviews were used with multiple groups of respondents: administrators, an ISS monitor, teachers, and counselors. Interviews were with a smaller group of 3 individuals from the original 15 participants. The responses in the interviews were the same as those given on the questionnaire instruments. Authenticity, quality, and truthfulness were traits demonstrated through the interviews, presenting trustworthiness in the research (Cypress, 2017). Questions for the teachers and counselors were similar to the questions for the administrators and ISS monitor.

The findings were derived from elementary school teachers, administrators, in-school suspension (ISS) monitors, and counselors. Qualitative findings with small samples were not expected to be widely transferable as described by Creswell & Creswell in 2018. Validity was achieved by the use of member checking to further ensure the dependability and validity of the study. The transcripts from the interviews were shared with each participant to ensure responses were correctly recorded interpretations. Study participants reviewed personal transcribed responses for accuracy. If participants did not respond with any changes within 10 days, the transcription was assumed to be accurate. None of the participants made changes.

Trustworthiness was ensured by considering potential researcher bias during data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflecting on personal biases and preconceptions prior to data collection mitigated this limitation. Subject-matter experts were used to help ensure no researcher bias was present in data instruments. Acknowledging personal expectations prior to analysis of the data allows a researcher to avoid letting such bias contaminate the initial analysis.

Chapter Summary

Results or findings revealed from this study answered each research question. The participants' responses were straightforward, and interviews provided additional detailed supporting data. Both in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of school suspension (OSS) had perceived benefits and limitations for elementary school students. Six themes emerged for research question one, regarding benefits to suspensions for elementary school students, in order of frequency: (a) in ISS, classwork can be worked on and behavior can be monitored in a structured, supervised school environment; (b) disruptive students can be removed from the classroom or school environment; (c) no benefits are noted for suspensions; (d) OSS gains the attention of parents, (e) suspension was found to be a beneficial punitive measure, and (f) OSS offered time for student counseling and reflection. Four themes emerged for research question two, regarding limitations to suspensions for elementary school students, in order of frequency: (a) ISS has inadequate resources to provide a structured learning environment for elementary students, (b) suspension results in missed instruction, (c) lack of supervision in OSS does not improve behavior, and (d) more counseling support is needed to improve student behavior. The main limitation of ISS was inadequate resources to provide a structured learning environment for elementary students. One of the main perceived limitations for both ISS and OSS was students missing instruction. Research findings and data analysis results were listed in detail in this chapter. Discussion, conclusions, more information on the findings, interpretations, and limitations of the study are included in Chapter 5. Recommendations and implications for leadership are presented as well.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, in-school suspension (ISS) monitors, and school counselors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. Suspensions are included in disciplinary consequences used as tools by teachers and administrators for classroom management in response to students misbehaving to create environments conducive to learning. Fifteen elementary school employees completed questionnaires: four teachers, three administrators, one ISS monitor, and seven school counselors. Three participants were interviewed. The problem was elementary school students are disciplined using ISS or out-of-school suspension (OSS); however, school personnel's perceptions about the benefits and limitations of suspensions are unknown.

Results or findings revealed from this study answered each research question. The participants' responses were straightforward, and the interviews provided further clarification. Both ISS and OSS at the elementary school level have perceived benefits and limitations. The benefits (Research Question One) include disruptive students being removed from the learning environment. One of the main limitations for both ISS and OSS (Research Question Two) was students missing instruction.

Findings, Interpretations, Conclusions

A gap in the literature reflects limited suspension-related research in elementary schools, with most of the research conducted with high schools and middle schools (Jacobsen et al., 2016; Musu-Gillette et al., 2018). School suspensions, in this study, were not found or proven to change problem behaviors. According to Jacobsen et al. (2016), the proof is lacking on school

suspensions changing or correcting negative behaviors such as aggression. Lovelace et al. (2018) reported similar findings. Researchers have reported school suspensions having negative impacts on student learning, reading abilities, future college entrance exam scores, and dropout rates (Kirkman et al., 2016).

Limited evidence of students reducing their negative behaviors by being suspended repeatedly was reported by Massar et al. (2015). Another assumption would support or confirm Bandura's (1999) social cognitive learning theory. The social cognitive learning theory suggests individuals learn from interactions with others in social contexts. The literature focused on the concept of zero tolerance resulting in increased school suspensions at elementary, middle, and high school levels (Triplett et al., 2014). Extended studies and results found in reports by the South Carolina State Department of Education (2019) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) disclosed data on ethnic minorities being suspended more often than students in the majority group for the same or similar offenses.

Benefits to ISS and OSS in Elementary Schools

According to the data from this study, student fighting and aggressive behaviors were the most common reasons students received ISS or OSS. Other main reasons cited for ISS and OSS included disrespect of staff and accumulations of referrals. Musu-Gillette et al. (2018) revealed more middle and high school administrators than elementary school administrators reported providing training for school staff on recognizing behaviors of physical, verbal, and social bullying.

Six themes emerged for research question one, regarding benefits of suspensions for elementary school students, in order of frequency: (a) in ISS, students can work on classwork and behavior in a structured, supervised school environment; (b) removal of the disruptive

student from the classroom or school environment; (c) no benefits to suspension; (d) OSS gets parents' attention, (e) suspension as a beneficial punitive measure, and (f) OSS offers time for counseling and reflection. The traditional goal of OSS has been to achieve safe environments for students and staff members (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Teachers and counselors indicated a benefit of OSS was faculty and staff getting a reprieve from disruptive students, allowing the compliant students and staff to feel safe. Sprague (2018) noted the importance of exclusionary discipline practices being temporary measures to allow learning in schools to continue and ensure the safety of others. Responses indicated the participants agreed ISS was more beneficial than OSS because the students can remain at school, supervised, and be allowed to complete schoolwork. Teachers and counselors suggested students could work on character building during ISS. Yet Gahungu (2018) reported ISS and OSS were overused for isolating students in solitary environments, which negatively impacts students' academic achievement over time. Children learn best in interactive, social contexts, according to Bandura's (1999) social cognitive learning theory. To change behaviors, individuals need to model positive behaviors of others as well as be provided a social framework for understanding appropriate behaviors and consequences (Bandura, 1999).

Respondents stated ISS was more beneficial to working parents, as OSS would require parents to miss work or find childcare. Administrators noted OSS was more likely to get the attention of the students' parents or guardians and set an example for other students. OSS requires more attention from the parents, per the participants' responses, who may have to miss work, find childcare, and meet with the school administrators upon students' return to school. For some parents, OSS provides an opportunity to partner with school personnel to explore strategies to help students improve behaviors. Schools could offer programs for parents of

suspended students to help address misbehaviors (Gahungu, 2018). Training for parents could inform about policies and practices and provide opportunities for reviewing school-wide discipline practices and procedures.

Limitations of ISS and OSS in Elementary Schools

Four themes emerged for research question two, regarding limitations to suspensions for elementary school students, in order of frequency: (a) ISS has inadequate resources to provide a structured learning environment for elementary students, (b) suspension results in missed instruction, (c) lack of supervision in OSS does not improve behavior, and (d) more counseling support is needed to improve student behavior. The main limitation of ISS was inadequate resources to provide a structured learning environment for elementary students. One of the main perceived limitations for both ISS and OSS was students missing instruction.

The main limitation participants noted for both types of suspension was a loss of instructional time and often lack of follow-up on instruction when students return to class. This perception was supported by literature showing suspensions result in lowered academic achievement over time (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; Gahungu, 2018; Hwang, 2018). One suspension increases the likelihood of future suspensions and possibly expulsion after multiple suspensions (McNeill, Friedman, & Chavez, 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). Each suspension potentially places students further behind academically (McNeill et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). Suspensions are not specifically reserved for the most severe behaviors. Less than 10% of students who were suspended each day receive the punishment for serious offenses (Gahungu, 2018). Offenses deemed minor, such as disrespect, class disruptions, disobedience, and accumulations of offenses, may result in suspensions, which negatively affect the students (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; Owora et al., 2018; Wilson, 2014). Removing a

student from the needed social context of learning for minor infractions has negative consequences outweighing the infraction (Bandura, 1999).

A frequent limitation noted in the participants' responses was the lack of adequate space or areas to house ISS students along with the lack of adequate staff qualified to manage structured ISS sessions. This was indicated in the responses on the study instruments Owora et al. (2018) noted suspensions negatively affect parents, school communities, and classmates. Elementary students need qualified individuals in charge who can help young students with the classwork assigned. A first grader needs more adult assistance with schoolwork than a fifth-grader, yet both may be assigned to the same area for ISS. Other limitations listed included students sleeping in ISS, due to a lack of active ISS supervision. One participant commented ISS monitors need to be paid more.

Some participants stated many students do not mind OSS or ISS when allowed to sleep during the time or watch TV at home during OSS. Students suspended from school may have a deficit in self-regulation skills, yet the isolation of OSS does not promote self-regulation. With self-regulation, individuals actively engage in developing functional patterns of thinking and behaving in response to environmental conditions to attain personal goals (Bandura, 1999). Learning self-regulation requires an appropriate social context. Further, Sprague (2018) noted suspensions or disciplinary exclusion practices are usually described as punishment strategies and do not reduce the probability of future negative behaviors. Based on social cognitive learning theory, students learn to change behavior based on social settings (Bandura, 1999). Students need a framework of modeled positive behaviors to imitate.

Additional supporting statements of the limitations associated with OSS include the actual behaviors not being addressed. Some students view OSS as a reward, a holiday, and a

break from school. Limitations for OSS included lack of proper supervision in the community, where students are likely to fall into more negative behaviors when associating with fellow OSS students. Suspending students from the school to restore order could unintentionally trigger additional adverse consequences (Perry & Morris, 2014).

Conclusions

Participants noted a need for alternative programs or practices such as restorative justice. Professional development intervention programs and training for school staff have focused on strategies for classroom management (Flynn et al., 2016). Studies revealed schools with intervention programs experienced significant reductions in behavior incidents and school suspensions during the following school year (Flynn et al., 2016). In a study with children under 9 years of age, Jacobsen et al. (2016) suggested the issues of classroom management, classroom organization, and instructional formats as the causes of student problem behaviors; professional development can help. Skiba and Losen (2016) recommended practices to create orderly, civil, and safe school climates teaching students basic values of cooperation and respect. Students learn in a social environment, but the context of the environment affects behavior as well as learning (Bandura, 1999).

Programs are needed to assess student behaviors and the underlying causes of negative behaviors, as noted by the participants. Hannigan and Hannigan (2016) compared school discipline practices to practices for teaching students reading. Students struggling to read would not be sent home for a day or period, as in OSS, and expected to return to school as a fluent reader. Disruptive students who find it difficult to behave appropriately are sent home, suspended for a day or period, and expected to return to school with decent behaviors (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2016). The expectation may not be realistic. Conversely, comprehensive school

counseling programs allow students to acquire self-regulation (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). Lack of self-regulation is a contributor to student suspensions, and students need to learn how to develop functional patterns of behavior and thinking in response to environmental situations (Bandura, 1999).

Limitations

Limitations include potential participants' unwillingness to take part in a study on suspending elementary students. The timing, unfortunately, became a limitation as well. During the 2019-2020 school year, several districts and schools contacted declined to allow school personnel to be approached for participation in the study due to legal issues at the time, involving discipline or exclusionary discipline concerns. Limitations in conducting research included certain populations being more difficult to access than others (Devotta et al., 2016).

The potential participants communicated a desire to support the study research, but hesitations stemmed from fears and apprehensions. Social desirability and fear of privacy breaches affected how populations with marginalized statuses engage with researchers (Devotta et al., 2016). Difficulty locating willing participants prolonged the data collection and analysis. Another limitation involved having to open up the population by adding school counselors to the list of participants. The addition of school counselors increased the overall number of participants in the study.

An additional limitation was not all elementary schools have formal ISS programs. Elementary schools may not have space or extra classrooms to house ISS sessions or adequate personnel to manage structured ISS programs. Instead, a student or small group of students may spend time in the counselor's office, the administrator's office, or another teacher's classroom. Each situation created additional problems.

Transferability was enhanced by the use of purposive sampling (Cypress, 2017). Purposive sampling was used in this - study. The data findings were saturated after the first 10 questionnaire responses were recorded and were evident in the interviews as well. Triangulation within the study enhanced the credibility or internal validity through the use of two separate questionnaires provided to four groups of participants. The process of triangulation of the data and data analysis helped strengthen reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Recommendations

Research recommendations from this study include two possible future research studies. One study on in-school suspensions (ISS) and a separate study on out-of school suspensions (OSS), seeking additional data on both for elementary-level schools. The gap in the literature exists with a lack of focus on elementary-age students and more focus on middle and high school level schools (Kowalski et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette et al., 2018). Additional research on strategies such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at the elementary level can add to the research base. Surveys and other research could be conducted with school staff, students, parents, and other community stakeholders to explore the perceptions and realities of schools as a district and individually. Discipline data reviews are usually documented and are possible starting points for the studies.

Recommendations for individual school districts and leaders include establishing additional guidelines, after conducting the necessary research, for more equity in the use of exclusionary discipline practices. Realistically, all schools are different. District leaders could work together developing guidelines best suited for each campus while following the main guidelines at the district level. Ideally, exclusionary discipline could be reduced or eliminated

through the implementation of classroom-management professional development and school-wide programs like PBIS and restorative justice.

Providing education should be the main goal of schools. Teachers cannot educate students without establishing discipline and maintaining order (Gahungu, 2018). School leaders are obligated to protect teachers from violent, disruptive students while protecting students from mistreatment by other students (Gahungu, 2018). Studies have shown the adoption of prevention-based practices can reduce problematic behaviors and exclusionary discipline issues (Ashley, 2006; Riley, 2018). For example, the restorative justice practice of classroom circle time is effective with elementary school students (Ashley, 2006; Riley, 2018). Prevention-based, positive practices could contribute to safe environments for students and staff while improving academic achievement (Massar et al., 2015).

Implications for Leadership

Exclusionary discipline practices are overused, with less than 10% of suspensions resulting from serious offenses (Gahungu, 2018). Leaders could set up ongoing professional development for staff on student behaviors and classroom management. The professional development could include providing opportunities for all staff to participate in dialogue perspectives about school suspensions by assuring no one would be penalized. Using anonymous surveys or needs assessment could help initiate discussions. Implementation of preventive discipline programs and practices guided by research could offer alternatives. Counseling programs could possibly prevent future disruptions by students. Restorative justice and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) could become school-wide programs. Programs like those previously mentioned, provide a framework to assist students toward success academically and behaviorally (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2016; Nese & McIntosh, 2016).

The program has been noted for helping students become better decision-makers while being guided in the selection, integration, and implementation of best, evidence-based practices for improving academic and behavior outcomes (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2016).

Leaders could have the option for further research on alternative programs impacting student discipline issues and the effects on academic achievement for elementary students (McNeill et al., 2016). Administrators can work with teachers on improving classroom-management plans as part of the teacher's evaluation. These classroom management plans could be enforced or utilized with teachers of in-school suspensions (ISS) to help ensure more structured environments. For teacher evaluations, administrators can work with teachers in assisting as well as documenting the support provided and their observations (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2016). Regardless of the types of teacher-evaluation plans school districts have in place, teachers cannot be released from employment contracts until after a number of years of individualized support and properly documented outcomes addressing areas of concern, such as classroom management (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2016). Students struggling with discipline issues are not usually provided opportunities to receive extensive supports for behavior issues at school (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2016). Students should be afforded opportunities to receive extensive supports for behavioral issues. For example, comprehensive school counseling programs allow students to acquire self-regulation skills through an exploration of emotions, positive reinforcements, motives, and consequences of behaviors in group counseling sessions or individually (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). Behavioral counseling is also available for some, along with collaboration with outside agencies.

Conclusion

Exclusionary discipline practices are common in elementary schools. In one study (Jacobsen et al., 2016), 19% of students had been suspended or expelled by 9 years of age. Elementary school administrators, ISS monitors, teachers, and counselors participated in this study. The participants shared perceptions of the benefits and limitations of both ISS and OSS. Reasons for suspensions ranged from students fighting and being aggressive to accumulations of less severe offenses.

The majority of the responses from the questionnaires and interviews completed revealed disruptive students being removed from class or school environments as the main benefit of ISS and OSS. In-school suspension programs were perceived as beneficial in allowing students to remain at school doing schoolwork in a structured setting under adult supervision, although participants noted a lack of qualified staff and appropriate space. Supervision is important for elementary students whose parents do not have the ability or means to provide adequate childcare.

The limitations of student suspensions revealed in this study included students missing instruction and not always being supervised during OSS. Participants noted the lack of counseling and assessments needed to help determine the underlying causes of discipline issues with students. Some individuals questioned whether or not students understand the reason for suspension and what positives should come from the process. Others questioned whether or not suspensions improved students' negative behaviors in the future. Based on Bandura (1999), students learn better in a social context. Suspensions are overused, isolating students in areas away from the regular school population and in-home or community environments. School suspensions are known to negatively impact student achievement (Gahungu, 2018). The

limitations and benefits of both ISS and OSS are present in elementary schools as with middle and high schools. Results of this study support further research indicating the need for better classroom management and alternative, positive practices rather than exclusionary discipline.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Cover Letter for Teachers and School Counselors

Research Participant:

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this research study. Please read the information in this Informed Consent Letter and feel free to ask as many questions as you need to. Questions are welcomed before you decide to become a participant in the study, during the study and afterwards. You may drop out of the study at any time.

Project Title:

A Qualitative Research Case Study on Elementary School Teachers', School Counselors', Administrators', and Suspension Monitors' Perspectives on the Benefits and Limitations of Elementary School Suspensions

Lead Researcher: Dedra A. Baskin

Committee Chair: Dr. Cathy McKay

Organization: American College of Education

Investigator:

My name is Dedra Anita Baskin, and I am an American College of Education student. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Cathy McKay, my committee chair.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of the study is to collect the perspectives of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and suspension monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. These suspensions include both out-of-school (OSS) and in-school suspensions (ISS). There is currently limited research on elementary school teachers' perceptions of school suspensions and benefits and limitations.

Research Design & Procedures:

The research will utilize a basic qualitative study design consisting of eight survey questions. The first two are multiple-choice questions and ask about your education and experience. For the remaining six survey questions, answer in your own words and in as much detail as you can.

A few participants will be asked to participate in an additional face-to-face interview. The same anonymity will be preserved for interview responses. The interview should take less than 1 hour and will be conducted at a quiet, private location you suggest. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in the interview:

_____ Yes, I might be interested in participating in an interview.

Participant Selection:

Regular education teachers and school counselors from five elementary schools (as well as administrators and ISS monitors) are being asked to participate in the study. The criteria for the participants include (a) being regular education teachers or school counselors (b) with one year or more of teaching experience, in (c) public elementary schools that use ISS and/or OSS.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in the study is voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, but it will be greatly appreciated. You will be able to stop participation at any time without questions asked. The survey will be anonymous through SurveyMonkey.

Time Required:

Only a few minutes of your time will be needed to complete the survey. Follow-up questions may be asked by the observer to help clarify and ensure valid responses.

Risks:

There are no potential risks for the participants for taking part in the study. The information shared will be confidential as to who is sharing information. The study facilitator, Dedra Baskin, is the only individual who will know any names of potential participants as I reach out asking for participation. The results will not be connected to names.

Benefits:

No direct benefits will be available to the participants. The information provided by participants eventually may lead to the sharing of valuable information in reference to how teachers perceive the benefits and limitations of elementary school suspensions. There are no reimbursements.

Confidentiality:

None of the participants' names or any other identifying information will be shared with anyone not directly connected with the study. The name of the district and school will not be used. The information may be shared with the committee chair, but only if necessary. Participants will be assigned numbers to correlate with coding and development of common threads or themes. The information gathered will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Sharing Results:

Upon completion of the research study and the dissertation process, the data and study results can be shared with participants. Later the dissertation project is planned to be published.

Right to Participate or Withdraw:

Participation in the study is voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw at any time.

Questions about the study:

Any questions about the entire study or processes involved may be addressed via:

Phone:

E-mail:

You may also contact the American College of Education

Giving Consent:

I willingly acknowledge receiving, reading and understanding this Informed Consent Form inviting participation in this study. I agree to willingly participate with all questions answered satisfactorily. I verify that I am 18 years old or older.

Print or Type Participant's name _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date: _____

The observer confirms the participant was given adequate time to ask questions about the study and they will be/have been answered successfully. The observer confirms no coercion was used nor any promises made to participants in the study. The participant will/has received a copy of this consent form.

Print or Type Name of Researcher: Dedra A. Baskin

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix B

Teacher and School Counselor Questionnaire

Elementary School Teachers' and School Counselors' Perceptions on the Benefits and Limitations of Suspensions

NOTE: To complete this survey, you must be a **regular education elementary school teacher** with **at least one year of teaching experience** or **elementary school counselor with at least one year of experience**.

1. How many years have you been a teacher or counselor at your current school?
 - (a) 20 or more years, (b) 5–10 years, (c) less than 5 years
2. What is the highest educational level you have achieved?
 - (a) bachelor's, (b) master's, (c) doctorate
3. What reasons are **most** students suspended for? Type in your answers below.
4. What do you perceive as the benefits of **in-school** suspension programs in elementary schools?
5. What do you perceive as limitations of **in-school** suspension programs in elementary schools?
6. What do you perceive as the benefits of **out-of-school** suspension programs in elementary schools?
7. What do you perceive as limitations of **out-of-school** suspension programs in elementary schools?
8. Please share any additional thoughts about school suspensions.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Cover Letter for Administrators and ISS Monitors

Research Participant:

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this research study. Please read the information in this Informed Consent Letter and feel free to ask as many questions as you need to. Questions are welcomed before you decide to become a participant in the study, during the study and afterwards. You may drop out of the study at any time.

Project Title:

A Qualitative Research Case Study on Elementary School Teachers', School Counselors', Administrators', and Suspension Monitors' Perspectives on the Benefits and Limitations of School Suspensions

Lead Researcher: Dedra A. Baskin

Committee Chair: Dr. Cathy McKay

Organization: American College of Education

Investigator:

My name is Dedra Anita Baskin, and I am an American College of Education student. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Cathy McKay, my committee chair.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, school counselors, administrators, and suspension monitors regarding the benefits and limitations of school suspensions. These suspensions include both out-of-school (OSS) and in-school suspensions (ISS). There is currently limited research on elementary school teachers' perceptions of school suspensions and benefits and limitations.

Research Design & Procedures:

The study will utilize a basic qualitative study design consisting of a survey. The survey will include eight items. Two items ask about your role and experience level. Six items ask you to type in information in your own words and in as much detail as you like.

A few participants will be asked to participate in an additional face-to-face interview. The same anonymity will be preserved for interview responses. The interview should take less than 1 hour and will be conducted at a quiet, private location you suggest. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in the interview:

____ **Yes, I might be interested in participating in an interview.**

Participant Selection:

Administrators and in-school suspension monitors (as well as teachers and school counselors) from five elementary schools are being asked to participate in the study. The criteria for the participants include (a) being an administrator or in-school suspension monitor (b) with 1 year or more of experience, in (c) public elementary schools that use ISS and/or OSS.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in the study is voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, but it will be greatly appreciated. You will be able to stop participation at any time without questions asked.

The survey will be anonymous through SurveyMonkey.

Time Required:

Only a few minutes of your time will be needed to complete the survey. Follow-up questions may be asked by the observer to help clarify and ensure valid responses.

Risks:

There are no potential risks for the participants for taking part in the study. The information shared will be confidential as to who is sharing information. The observer, Dedra Baskin, is the only individual who will know any names of potential participants as I reach out asking for participation. The results will not be connected to names.

Benefits:

No direct benefits will be available to the participants. The information provided by participants eventually may lead to the sharing of valuable information in reference to how teachers perceive the effects of school suspensions on student behaviors. There are no reimbursements.

Confidentiality:

No participant's name or any other identifying information will be shared with anyone not directly connected with the study. The name of the district and school will not be used. The information may be shared with the committee chair, but only if necessary. Participants will be assigned numbers to correlate with coding and development of common threads or themes. The information gathered will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Sharing Results:

Upon completion of the research study and the dissertation process, the data and study results can be shared with participants. Later the dissertation project is planned to be published.

Right to Participate or Withdraw:

Participation in the study is voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw at any time.

Questions About the Study:

Any questions about the entire study or processes involved may be addressed via:

Phone:

E-mail:

You may also contact the American College of Education

Giving Consent:

I willingly acknowledge receiving, reading and understanding this Informed Consent Form inviting participation in this study. I agree to willingly participate with all questions answered satisfactorily. I verify that I am 18 years old or older.

Print or Type Participant's name _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date: _____

The observer confirms the participant was given adequate time to ask questions about the study and they will be/have been answered successfully. The observer confirms no coercion was used nor any promises made to participants in the study. The participant will/has received a copy of this consent form.

Print or Type Name of Researcher: Dedra A. Baskin

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix D

Administrator and Monitor Questionnaire

Elementary School Administrators' and ISS Monitors' Perceptions Regarding the Benefits and Limitations of School Suspensions

1. How many years have you been a staff member at your current school?
(a) 20 or more years, (b) 5–10 years, (c) less than 5 years
2. What is the exact title you hold at the school? _____
3. Do you think school suspension programs are changing student behaviors? Please explain your answer.
4. Describe the main reasons students are assigned out-of-school and in-school suspensions (e.g., fighting, stealing, disrespect, bullying, etc.).
5. Please share your perceptions about the benefits of **in-school** suspensions in elementary schools.
6. Please share your perceptions about the limitations of **in-school** suspensions in elementary schools.
7. Please share your perceptions about the benefits of **out-of-school** suspensions in elementary schools.
8. Please share your perceptions about the limitations of **out-of-school** suspensions in elementary schools.

Appendix E

Interview Questions

1. Describe some of the criteria that warrant a student being suspended from school.
2. How many years have you been a teacher or staff member at your current school?
3. Have any of the students you teach ever been suspended from school? In-school (ISS) or out-of-school suspension (OSS)? For what reasons?
4. Describe what you perceive as benefits of ISS or OSS.
5. Describe what you perceive as limitations of ISS or OSS.
6. Describe what you think could improve school suspension programs.
7. Describe what affects you think school suspensions have on improving student negative behaviors.
8. Tell me whether you think school suspensions improve or have NO effect on the behaviors of students who are NOT being suspended. Why or why not?
9. Please share any additional thoughts about school suspensions.
10. Describe what you perceive as the benefits of ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools.
11. Describe what school staff perceive as limitations in school ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools.

*Clarification questions will follow based on participants' responses

Appendix F

Letter for Expert Review of Instruments

Fellow Colleagues,

Please assist me as I prepare my data collection instruments for my study: **A Qualitative Research Case Study on Elementary School Teachers', Administrators', and Suspension Monitors', and School Counselors' Perspectives on the Benefits and Limitations of School Suspensions.** Attached you will find the data collection instruments. Please read through the items for each instrument and provide feedback about understandability, clarity and relevance to the research questions. Thank you in advance as your help will help ensure validity in the study,

Research Questions

The objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers, administrators, in-school suspension (ISS) monitors, and school counselors regarding the effectiveness of school suspensions on changing negative behaviors of students. The following research questions were developed to guide the study.

Research Question One: How do teachers, administrators, in-school suspension monitors, and school counselors perceive benefits of ISS and out-of-school (OSS) programs in elementary schools?

Research Question Two: How do teachers, administrators, in-school suspension monitors, and school counselors perceive limitations in ISS and OSS programs in elementary schools?

Sincerely,

Dedra A. Baskin

Appendix G

Subject-Matter Experts

Subject-Matter Expert 1

Current Role: Rehabilitative Behavioral Health School Counselor for the school district and university professor

Experience/Research: 20+ years in school counseling, clinical counseling. Doctorate. University professor.

Subject-Matter Expert 2

Current Role: Rehabilitative Behavioral Health School Counselor for the school district

Experience/Research: 30+ years in school counseling, clinical counseling. Doctorate. Former university professor.

Subject-Matter Expert 3

Current Role: School counselor and district office public relations

Experience/Research: 20+ years in rehabilitative counseling, school counseling, and human relations

Subject-Matter Expert 4

Current Role: Administrator (recent retiree), state-level consultant working with lower-performing districts' administrators and teachers

Experience/Research: 30+ years

Subject-Matter Expert 5

Current Role: Teacher

Experience/Research: 20+ years of experience as an educator

Subject-Matter Expert 6

Current Role: Teacher

Experience/Research: 30+ years of experience as an educator

Appendix H

Permission from District Superintendent

RE: Research Study

Tue, Oct 15, 2019 10:20 am

Dear Ms. Baskin,

After reviewing your letter of request to survey select HCS employees at the elementary school level for the purpose of your doctoral studies, I offer the following:

1. The [county school district] employees you contact may participate in your study if they choose to do so. Their participation is entirely voluntary.
2. Any information submitted to you for your study must not identify the employee or school.
3. Upon completion of your study, I would request that you forward me a courtesy copy of the final document.

Sincerely,

[Name withheld]**Superintendent****[School district]**

Appendix I

E-Mails Asking for Participation

E-mails were sent out initially asking to scan and return items. After no response, documents were mailed via U.S. mail and responses were mailed back via self-addressed, stamped envelopes provided by the researcher.

Help needed please

Fri, Oct 18, 2019 10:52 am

[INFORMED Consent ADMINISTRATOR...pdf \(343 KB\)](#)

October 18, 2019

Hello and I pray all is well with you. Thank you for your valuable time as an educator. My name is Dedra Baskin and I am a doctoral student needing your assistance in conducting a study on your perspectives concerning elementary school suspensions. The surveys are very brief, only eight (8) items, and they will be confidential with only me knowing your name. Your district was chosen because I do not know anyone employed there and I do have [the superintendent's] permission to contact you asking for your help. If you are willing to help me, **please** print the attached *Informed Consent Form* with my signature, add your signature, scan and return to me as soon as you can. I will then send you the link to the brief survey. Again, thank you for your time and consideration in helping me complete this journey.

Thanking you in advance,

Dedra Baskin

Help needed please

Wed, Dec 11, 2019 11:36 am

Dedra Baskin (xxxxxxxx@aol.com)

[Informed Consent signed.docx \(50 KB\)](#)

[TEACHER SURVEY.docx \(11 KB\)](#)

Hello, I have permission from the superintendent to ask individuals for help in completing a short survey on the perspectives about elementary school suspensions. There is limited literature on suspensions on the elementary level which is why I chose the topic for my research paper. Please, please, please print the attached Informed Consent Forms (where you are assured of no harm, no cost, etc.), sign your name (I am the only one to see your name---I have to have your

permission/consent in my personal file), and print and complete the short survey without putting your name on it. Then, simply scan and return to my email. Again, this is confidential and your feedback is needed for the completion of my paper. Thank you in advance for taking the time to help with this important matter.

Dedra Baskin