THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATORS WHO TEACH STUDENTS WHO HAVE ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD): A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

BY

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SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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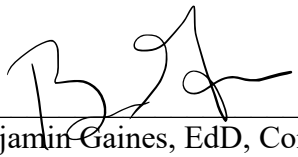

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to educators, students, families, and communities working together to improve the learning environment for each student.

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ABSTRACT

Kindergarten and first-grade students who have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have additional learning needs impeding the learning of self and others. The purpose of the qualitative study was to investigate: (a) the successes, challenges, barriers, and needs of teachers working with students who have ADHD; (b) teachers' sense of self-efficacy in working with students who have ADHD; and (c) any differences in successes, challenges, barriers, and needs to mitigate the problem of how to teach kindergarten and first-grade students who have ADHD. A qualitative phenomenological research design guided the collection and analysis of data. This study's participants were selected by using purposeful sampling and included general education and special education teachers from California and Texas who taught students in kindergarten or first grade with ADHD. Conducting semistructured interviews and inductive data analysis led to a better understanding of teacher self-efficacy and characteristics to determine differentiated needs and themes. The objective was to learn about the participants' lived experiences when teaching kindergarten or first-grade students with ADHD and any differentiated needs based on experiences and teacher characteristics. The responses from participants may assist (a) school leaders when selecting and creating effective professional development, (b) teacher professional developers when creating training, and (c) university officials when developing teacher education courses. Recommendations for future research include expanding the geographical area and grade range of this study. Another recommendation is to conduct related research using an in-depth case study to research a teacher who instructs students who have ADHD and a teacher who instructs students who have autism.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common mental disorder affecting children (American Psychiatric Association, 2023). Approximately 8–9% of children (i.e., birth to age 17) are diagnosed with ADHD and are typically diagnosed once they are school aged (American Psychiatric Association, 2023). ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder with hyperactivity, impulsivity, and/or inattention prevalent across settings that impedes function and persists for at least 6 months (Boon, 2020; Braude & Dwarika, 2020; Jaye et al., 2020). There are three subtypes of ADHD: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive/impulsive, or a combined type (American Psychiatric Association, 2023; Boon, 2020; Jaye et al., 2020). Inattention refers to difficulty with keeping focus, hyperactivity is excessive movement for the setting, and impulsivity entails acting without thinking (American Psychiatric Association, 2023). According to Blake and Dwarika (2020), individuals with ADHD have challenges with personal, social, and academic functions.

Inclusive education means students with disabilities learn in mainstream or general education classrooms (Braude & Dwarika, 2020). An inclusive education provision provides support for students with disabilities, including students with ADHD (Boon, 2020). According to Colomer et al. (2017), students with ADHD are at a higher risk of school failure including poor grades, grade retention, and low academic achievement. Elementary school teachers lack knowledge about ADHD and have minimal courses related to students with special needs, which impacts their ability to effectively teach students with ADHD, who often present behavioral, academic, and relational challenges in classroom settings (Hapsari et al., 2020). Inclusive education

integrates additional support and implementation of pedagogies that foster learning for students with ADHD (Boon, 2020). Research has shown educators and training play a critical role in supporting and teaching students with ADHD; for example, Jaye et al. (2020) found teachers who had a personal relationship with a person with ADHD and/or participated in reading articles or training related to ADHD had a better understanding of the symptoms and features of ADHD. Another qualitative study by Braude and Dwarika (2020) demonstrated teachers who had extensive training and coursework about ADHD were more confident in understanding and identifying students with ADHD compared to teachers who were not formally trained.

The goal of this study was to describe and analyze the lived experience of general education and special education teachers who teach kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD to inform the professional development content for primary-grade teachers, including strategies for successful support and instructional practices for academic learning and social–emotional behavioral skills in inclusive learning environments. Although there exist studies on what strategies have been successful (Boon, 2020; Rimestad et al., 2017), few studies have focused on teacher experiences while working with students with ADHD in the general education and special education classroom learning environments. Understanding the lived experiences of general education and special education teachers, including their previous education and professional development training, knowledge, practice, successes, obstacles, and sense of self-efficacy, is a precursory step in developing targeted professional development to support educators of students with ADHD. The information gained from this research adds to the literature on ADHD and the development of training for educators.

Study Background/Foundation

Inclusive education provides students with special needs the opportunity to learn grade-level content, curriculum, and standards in the same general education learning environment as their typically developing peers. In the U.S. public school system, students with special needs receive additional support during their school day as designated by a multidisciplinary team of staff members (Zagona et al., 2017). The individualized education program (IEP) team meets at least once a year to review each student's individualized plan to ensure the educational system is meeting the student's unique needs.

Students with ADHD belong to a subpopulation of students who have special needs. ADHD is the most common child neurodevelopmental disorder (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). ADHD affects 3–5% of preschoolers and 8–11% of school-aged children (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Students with ADHD can have serious cognitive, social, emotional, and academic impairments (Tien et al., 2019). Characteristics indicative of a student with ADHD include inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Jaye et al., 2020; Silk et al., 2019). Distractibility, not listening, failing to pay close attention to detail, making careless mistakes, and difficulty sustaining attention are inattentive symptoms (Silk et al., 2019). Hyperactivity and impulsivity symptoms include fidgeting, extra movement, excessive running, blurting out, interrupting, and difficulty engaging in leisure activities (Silk et al., 2019). Behaviors symptomatic of ADHD (e.g., interrupting instruction, running around the classroom, blurting out, and excessive talking) are problematic in the classroom setting and impact the learning of the student with ADHD and the learning of peers.

Although ADHD is common, students with ADHD present with some additional challenges and needs compared to typically developing peers in the areas of emotional understanding, reactivity, and regulation (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Although there have been studies conducted on understanding and supporting students with ADHD (Boon, 2020; Braude & Dwarika, 2020; Jaye et al., 2020), students with ADHD continue to struggle at school, demonstrating difficulties in concentration, hyperactivity, and impulsivity impacting academic, social, emotional, and behavioral learning during school and continuing into adulthood (Hotez et al., 2022). A need exists for further research into successful instructional practices to ensure students with ADHD can learn and access grade-level curriculum without impeding their learning or the learning of others.

Current State of the Field in which the Problem Exists

Approximately 7.2% of children globally and 9.4–14% in the United States are diagnosed with ADHD, with one third of children diagnosed before age 6 (Liu, 2020). Students with ADHD may require behavioral, academic, and emotional support in the general education setting to ensure they have equitable access to content, curriculum, and instruction. Students between the ages of 3 and 21 may receive special education support and services if qualified for special education through evaluation processes and the development of an IEP (Liu, 2020). Students who do not qualify for special education may receive support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Liu, 2020). Liu (2020) discussed additional behavioral, pharmacologic, and nonpharmacologic management with medical professionals as another layer of a system of support for students with ADHD.

Students with ADHD learn in inclusive general education classrooms. In one study on inclusion in South Africa, Mamabolo et al. (2021) found teachers were willing to include all students, including students with learning barriers, and were willing to use diverse instructional strategies; however, they expressed concern for the ability of those students with learning barriers to develop social skills in an inclusive setting. Teachers also expressed a lack of understanding of the resources needed to support learners with disabilities (Mamabolo et al., 2021). It is not surprising, then, that a review of research specifically addressing inclusive education for students with disabilities found students who have extensive support needs often learn in separate settings excluded from general education. According to McCabe and Ruppar (2023), teachers showed concern about access to resources to support their students with disabilities who had extensive needs in the general education setting. This research supports a better understanding of the lived experience of general education and special education teachers in terms of their knowledge of ADHD and their sense of self-efficacy in working with students with ADHD to determine what support and training are needed to better equip teachers when facilitating learning for students with ADHD.

Historical Background

In the United States, all students have the right to an education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that recipients of Section 504 funding (e.g., public school districts) provide free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each qualified individual with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This requirement means students with disabilities must obtain appropriate education through the public education system. The definition of appropriate education is “education in regular

education, education in regular classes with the use of aids and services, or special education and related services in separate classrooms for all or portions of the school day" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, "How is an Appropriate Education Defined" section). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), education provided must meet the needs of students with disabilities to the same extent education meets the needs of typically developing students with comparable facilities, equipment, and materials.

In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, also known as Public Law 94-142, ensured children with disabilities would have opportunities to go to school with FAPE in the least restrictive environment (LRE; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that was reauthorized in 2004 to ensure students with disabilities who are qualified for special education receive special education and related services (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). IDEA governs how states provide early intervention, special education, and related services to eligible children (i.e., infants through youth) with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). IDEA also focuses on providing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum. Through IDEA legislation, classroom settings have become more inclusive. Significant progress made from 1975–2021 included changing from approximately 1.8 million children excluded from public schools to providing children special education and related services specifically and individually designed to meet the needs of more than 7.5 million students in the 2020–2021 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), in the 2020–2021 school year, 66% of students with

disabilities learned in the general education classroom for at least 80% of their school day.

There are 13 disability categories covered under IDEA: specific learning disability; other health impairment (OHI); autism spectrum disorder; emotional disturbance; speech or language impairment; visual impairment, including blindness; deafness; hearing impairment; deaf-blindness; orthopedic impairment; intellectual disability; traumatic brain injury; and multiple disabilities (Lee, 2022). Students must meet the eligibility criteria to be eligible for special education and related services. A student's school performance must be considered adversely affected by one or more of the disabilities in one of the 13 disability categories (Lee, 2022). Students with ADHD could qualify under OHI if ADHD adversely impacts the students' school performance. Students with ADHD require additional support and instructional practices to mitigate behaviors such as inattention or limited executive functioning, which may impede their learning (Lee, 2022). Impairments in reading, math, and interpersonal skills may also be chronic in students with ADHD, making early screening, intervention, and early treatment necessary (DuPaul et al., 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), students eligible for special education obtain an IEP ensuring FAPE in LREs.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

There are numerous studies focused on students with ADHD (DuPaul et al., 2016; Hutchinson et al., 2016; NoackLeSage et al., 2019; Tien et al., 2019; Wender & Tomb, 2016); however, there remains a lack of studies focused on training and support for educators who provide instruction for these students in classroom settings. Understanding

the individual student and their unique characteristics was a theme evident in the literature. Yamanashi (2017) addressed the need to look at a student's educational needs, rather than their disability, to provide the student access to mainstream education through integrated practices. Yamanashi addressed key issues related to instructional practices, students' educational needs, processes, legislation, and human rights.

Another theme that emerged in a review of ADHD research was the need for academic, social, and emotional support for students who have special needs. Students with ADHD present with emotional competency impairments with characteristics of dysregulation or negative emotions (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Understanding students' needs related to academics, social skills, and emotional competency is necessary when providing support in developing areas of deficit. Lugo-Candelas et al.'s (2017) team used a comprehensive approach to examine deficits or challenges around emotional competency. For students with ADHD, conditions related to sensory dysregulation, under- or over-responsivity, and sensory-seeking behaviors may adversely affect students' abilities to adapt to daily situations, including school activities (Shimizu et al., 2014). According to Colomer et al. (2017), students with ADHD are at a higher risk of school failure, including poor grades, grade retention, and low academic achievement.

Much of the literature listed the characteristics of ADHD (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017) and the potential areas of need for individuals with ADHD (Van Boxtel, 2017). For example, Van Boxtel (2017) investigated recommendations for high-quality instructional practices to teach rigorous Common Core State Standards for teaching all students. The researchers found general education teachers and special education teachers worked

collaboratively to align and implement instructional best practices with rigorous standards (Van Boxtel, 2017). These efforts included the development of the Common Core State Standards aligned with IEPs for students with ADHD who qualified for special education support and services. The team determined present levels of function; assessment findings; development of measurable goals aligned to grade-level standards; and appropriate supports, accommodations, modifications, and services to construct the IEP. Van Boxtel's (2017) research provided a strong start; however, comparison and generalization warrant further exploration with a larger sample.

Another area of research focusing on student characteristics involved the emotional competency deficit of students with ADHD (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Specifically, one gap noted was the need to develop methods for students with ADHD to improve their emotional competency or ability to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Lugo-Candelas et al. (2017) posited that further research is needed to determine instructional practices and methods to support students with ADHD as they develop emotional competency and the ability to regulate emotions.

Outside of student characteristics, only a few studies have focused on teacher experiences and preparation for teaching students with ADHD. Zagona et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-methods research design that consisted of interviews and surveys of special education and general education teachers. This model was used to understand the general education and special education teachers' experiences and preparation for teaching students who have significant disabilities (Zagona et al., 2017). Understanding the teachers' knowledge, ideas, strategies, practices, and perspectives provided a baseline

of information for developing support for students with ADHD (Zagona et al., 2017). Research has showed education and training play a critical role in supporting and teaching students with ADHD (Jaye et al., 2020), but even with this conclusion, there remains a gap in the literature on this topic. Further research is needed to understand general and special education teacher preparation, opportunities for professional development, skills, and confidence in teaching students with ADHD.

Key Theories

A key theory that guided the approach of data analysis in this research was the theory of self-efficacy. Psychological disciplines have focused on how the mind works when gaining, storing, and retrieving information (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy refers to a belief in personal capabilities and influences how people think, feel, and act (Bandura, 1995). This term also influences how people motivate themselves and engage in learning activities (Bandura, 1995). Bandura (1995) asserted self-efficacy supports understanding of successes, challenges, barriers of learning, motivation, and staying power.

Another theory that illuminated the process of data analysis was the hierarchy of needs as related to the theory of human motivation. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory presents human needs in categories from basic survival needs to higher level needs. The categories are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). First, a person must meet their basic physiological needs (e.g., hunger), which are essential for survival. Once a person satisfies basic needs, the person may attend to advanced needs. The next level of needs are safety needs. Safety needs include living in a safe, healthy, and stable environment. Next, a person's desire for love, belonging, and affection emerges. Following love, esteem needs to emerge. Esteem needs

are twofold and include a need for self-esteem (i.e., the desire for strength and achievement) and a need for respect (i.e., having prestige and recognition from others; Maslow, 1943). Satisfaction of esteem leads to the need for self-actualization. Although the five different categories start with basic needs and progress to higher level needs, there are times when individuals place a higher emphasis on specific higher level need categories and less emphasis on other higher level need categories. Meeting basic needs (e.g., food and shelter) occurs before moving to higher level needs (McLeod, 2018). For teachers, motivation for esteem and self-actualization served as a guide for this research study.

According to Maslow (2014), motivation and growth occur with deficiency motivation or growth motivation. In other words, motivation occurs when a person wants, yearns, wishes for, or lacks. A teacher who yearns for esteem, a higher level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, may work to advance at work to feel a sense of accomplishment. Understanding Maslow's hierarchy of needs was important when examining teachers' motivations to learn, grow, and become more effective in their teaching practices.

Problem Statement

Students can receive an ADHD diagnosis as early as 4 years old (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The general problem explored in this study was students with ADHD are most often placed in the general education classroom, yet they have additional learning needs this environment cannot always provide. When students are off task, acting out, defiant, or impulsive, it impedes their learning and may impede the learning of others.

Students with ADHD need a specific instructional plan and support to learn in general education K–1 classroom setting. The specific problem was that K–1 general education teachers may not know effective instructional strategies to teach and support students with ADHD in general education settings. General education teachers need to use successful instructional strategies to support students with ADHD in the general education classroom setting. Although training has been shown to improve teachers' efficacy in teaching students with ADHD (Jaye et al. 2020), such training may not be provided to all teachers, and the elements of effective training are not clear cut. A first step to creating this type of training is knowing what teachers experience in the classroom. Thus far, little is known about the lived experiences of teachers, including their needs, barriers, and successes with this student population.

Audience

The audience for this study includes numerous stakeholders in the field of education. The intended audience at the elementary school level includes teachers, students and their families, and site and district leadership. Teachers participating in the study shared their experiences. Other teachers can read the experiences of colleagues and make connections to successes, challenges, barriers, and efficacy. Teachers are also the educational leaders in the classroom who make instructional decisions. Students and their families are stakeholders in this research because they are members of the elementary site who experience the learning environments. Site leadership teams and district leadership teams might also be able to gain an understanding of the potential needs of teachers at their sites and in their districts based on the experiences of teachers included in this study.

Specific Leadership Problem

The specific leadership problem was a lack of understanding of the experiences of general education and special education teachers who work with kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD. The data gathered on the lived experiences of teachers provided knowledge, successes, barriers, and a sense of efficacy felt by the educators. This research provided information needed for the future development of teacher training, professional development, resources, and supports to ensure students with ADHD have access to high-quality instruction that meets their learning needs. Leaders in the field of education (e.g., teachers, site administrators, district administrators) can use the information gained throughout this research to (a) better understand teacher experiences with students with ADHD and their specific needs, (b) create appropriate learning environments and opportunities for students with ADHD, and (c) provide opportunities for professional development training for teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' experiences and sense of self-efficacy in working with students with ADHD to mitigate the problem of how to teach kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD in elementary classrooms. This research addressed an area of special education that researchers have yet to explore and research fully. The findings of this study add to the body of knowledge and help with the development of special education and general education instructional practices used to support students with ADHD in kindergarten and first grade. Findings from this study add to the knowledge base for general educators, special educators, administrators, and

teacher candidates and ultimately influence the instructional practices of primary elementary educators.

Methodology and Research Design Overview

The methodology of this research was qualitative. Qualitative research inquiries about and explores social or human problems using analysis of words and conveying detailed views of participants in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design was a phenomenological study. A phenomenological study incorporates the meaning of an experience or phenomenon for several individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dodgson, 2023). A phenomenological study aims at understanding the nature or meaning of experiences (Patton, 2002). Phenomenology is a way to explore how people make sense of experiences (Patton, 2002). Creswell and Creswell (2023) and Dodgson (2023) stated phenomenological research strives to better understand experiences from a phenomenon, which generally involves conducting participant interviews about their experiences.

Phenomenological studies explore many aspects of human experiences. Phenomenological studies articulate a clear phenomenon to study, use data analysis, and communicate the overall essence of the experience and the context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This type of research includes the lived experiences of several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In addition, the participants' meaning is the focus and contributes to the overall understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In a phenomenological study, the researcher analyzes the data to determine themes based on the data collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Phenomenological studies describe a common meaning from several individuals who

have lived through an experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This style of research entails inquiry into the question or problem in search of understanding oneself and the world around oneself (Moustakas, 1994). This research explores what the individual experienced and how they experienced it by collecting data from the individuals who experienced the phenomenon and developing the essence of the experience for all individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, there was personal significance for teachers reflecting on their experiences teaching, and social significance for the field of education.

The research design was a phenomenological study, as it helped make meaning of a lived experience. To uncover these lived experiences and make meaning of them, I conducted interviews with participants and transcribed them for analysis. Interview transcript interpretation and analysis supported the discovery of themes across interviews or distinctive experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The classroom setting was the environment addressed in this study. The lived experience of general education and special education teachers instructing students with ADHD in kindergarten and first grade allowed for a better understanding of the successes, challenges, and barriers experienced by teachers.

The study population consisted of general education and special education teachers who taught kindergarten or first grade. Criterion sampling was used to select study participants. General education and special education teachers selected for this research had at least 1 year of experience teaching kindergarten or first grade. Teachers also had taught or were currently teaching students with ADHD. The sample size was 10 teachers, with five of the teachers representing general education teachers. According to

Peoples (2021), saturation was the key focus in qualitative research; however, a sample range should be included and is typically 8–15 participants.

I collected data during the interview by recording each interview through Zoom (i.e., video and audio recording software) and by taking notes. I used a semistructured interview format where I asked the same questions to each participant. Depending on the answers, I followed up with probing questions to elicit further information about the lived experience shared during the interview. I provided an opportunity for the participants to share any additional information that was not previously shared related to their experiences teaching kindergarten and/or first-grade students with ADHD. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. If additional information was needed, I conducted a second interview to follow up on the first by clarifying points or delving further into a specific experience the participant had shared.

Data collection included collecting data during the interviews by taking notes, video/audio recording the interview, and transcribing the interview. The interview protocol included a consent statement, demographic questions, criterion questions, interview questions with adequate space to take notes during the interview, and probing questions. I manually coded the information gained throughout the interviews. I manually managed and sorted the information gained into categories or codes. I used various codes to determine the themes that emerged from the semistructured interviews. I read each interview to gain an additional understanding of how each interviewee made sense of their experiences.

This study sample size was 10 participants, where five of the participants taught in the general education classroom setting and five of the participants taught special

education; however, I conducted interviews until reaching data saturation. Saturation occurs when no new themes, categories, or patterns emerge from interviewing more participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Analysis of general and special education teacher interviews determined themes or patterns. Practically speaking, in the process of collecting data, I transcribed and analyzed the data from the first few interviewees to find themes. Once no new themes emerged, saturation had occurred, and I stopped conducting interviews. Although 10–15 participants were the target sample size, through the process of interviewing until saturation occurred, I determined that 10 was the final number of participants.

The trustworthiness of this qualitative research was important. One method to ensure trustworthiness was member checking, which was employed to confirm what the participants said during the interview. Following the interview, each participant checked their interview transcript. The participants were able to add, remove, or clarify their statements. Reflexivity was another method related to trustworthiness. Reflexivity is an approach where the researcher is conscious of personal biases, values, and experiences that are related to the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Documentation of experiences and a discussion of how the experiences may impact the interpretation of the research was provided (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An additional step to ensure research credibility was selecting teachers to participate based on the criteria noted in the sample selection.

Research Questions

The following research questions grounded the study:

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of educators who are teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?

a. What successes have educators experienced with teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?
b. What barriers/challenges have educators experienced with teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?
c. What are the needs of educators who teach students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?

Research Question 2: Are there teacher characteristics that differentiate successes, barriers, and needs?

a. What are the teacher characteristics that differentiate successes, barriers, and needs?
b. How are the successes, barriers, and needs differentiated?

Teacher characteristics explored included, but were not limited to, credential or certification type, years of experience, professional development opportunities, professional development attendance, state of residence, gender, and degrees obtained.

Study Limitations

A limitation associated with phenomenology is researcher bias. Ways to avoid this bias included allowing all potential respondents to participate in the interview using open-ended questions, maintaining a neutral position, and recording responses for transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I kept detailed notes and recordings and accurately

recorded data that represented the participants' experiences and understanding. Bracketing to limit researcher bias. Chan et al. (2013) stipulated bracketing is a way to demonstrate validity during data collection and analysis through researcher efforts to put aside personal knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences to ensure an accurate representation of the lived experiences.

A limitation of interview-style research was ensuring trustworthy interview responses. To mitigate or reduce this limitation, teachers selected to participate worked directly with students with ADHD and taught the kindergarten and/or first grade. To ensure participant confidentiality, pseudonyms were used instead of participants' names, allowing participants to answer interview questions openly and honestly without fear of repercussion.

Another limitation was the sample size of 10 participants. This limitation could be mitigated with a larger number of participants; however, the design of this phenomenological study included collecting data until saturation occurred. Saturation occurred when no new themes or concepts were revealed throughout the interviews about participants' experiences teaching students with ADHD in kindergarten or first grade.

Study Delimitations

One delimitation included participant characteristics. The research study only included kindergarten and first-grade teachers providing instruction to students with ADHD in general education or special education classroom settings. This study focused on primary-grade teachers to determine their successes, challenges, barriers, and needs when teaching students with ADHD in kindergarten and first grade. The delimitations included a geographical boundary of California and Texas. Although these findings may

not be generalizable to other locations, the data provide opportunities to determine similarities and differences based on teaching similar-age students in a different state. General education and special education teachers of kindergarten or first-grade students with ADHD in Texas and California were recruited to participate in a cross-sectional phenomenological study where they shared their experiences teaching up to this point in their career. The findings and results of this study may not necessarily generalize to locations, other grade levels, or non-ADHD students.

Definitions of Key Terms

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a highly prevalent neurodevelopmental disorder that may present as inattention, disorganization, and/or hyperactivity–impulsivity (Benzing et al., 2018).

Inclusion is the education of students with disabilities in general education classrooms alongside students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible in the LRE (Henley et al., 2009).

Self-efficacy is a person's belief they can perform tasks as they have knowledge, skills, and ability (Bandura, 1995).

Thought disorder is an unusual or dysfunctional way of thinking (Hutchinson et al., 2016).

Summary

This phenomenological research explored teachers' experiences and sense of self-efficacy while instructing students with ADHD to mitigate the problem of how to teach kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD in elementary classrooms. Interviews of both general education teachers and special education teachers elicited findings on the

lived experiences of educators who taught kindergarten or first-grade students with ADHD to determine teachers' successes, challenges, barriers, needs, and sense of self-efficacy. Transcription of the interviews and member checking ensured the lived experience of each participant was documented accurately. The collective experiences provided information about similarities and differences in experiences, successes, challenges, barriers, and needs. The results of this study may serve multiple stakeholders (e.g., teachers, principals, district administrators). The results may serve higher education officials through changes in teacher coursework and school district personnel with the development and implementation of professional training, curriculum, and materials. In Chapter 2, a comprehensive review of existing literature on ADHD, educating students with ADHD, teacher training, and professional development, is presented.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a highly prevalent neurodevelopmental disorder in children and adolescents with primary symptoms including inattention, disorganization, and hyperactivity–impulsivity (Benzing et al., 2018). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders typically diagnosed during childhood and lasting into adulthood. Approximately 5% of children have ADHD (Silk et al., 2019). Students with ADHD are likely to have educational impairments (Power et al., 2012) and are at risk of failure in school (Colomer et al., 2017). Poor grades, repeating grades, and low academic achievement are some of the failures students with ADHD may encounter (Colomer et al., 2017). ADHD is often accompanied by learning disorders in the areas of reading, spelling, and math (Wender & Tomb, 2016). Behavior and emotional disorders also frequently accompany ADHD (Wender & Tomb, 2016). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), children with ADHD may present with difficulties paying attention and controlling impulses or being excessively active.

Challenges of Children With ADHD

Children with ADHD may have additional challenges in the areas of social–emotional well-being, behavior regulation, and academics (Tien et al., 2019). Early identification and treatment are ways to help support children with ADHD (Wender & Tomb, 2016). Fabiano et al. (2013) found teachers perceived there to be an under-identification of students with ADHD. In addition to teaching students with ADHD, teachers also educate students who have similar characteristics and learning needs

without a formal diagnosis. In this situation, teachers continue to teach and observe, document, and adjust instruction to meet students' behavior and academic needs (Fabiano et al., 2013). Inattentiveness or hyperactivity/impulsivity, distractibility, not listening, difficulty sustaining attention, and interrupting are also symptoms of ADHD (Silk et al., 2019). Some signs and symptoms of ADHD include squirming, fidgeting, losing possessions, talking excessively, making careless mistakes, having difficulty taking turns, facing challenges with resisting temptations, and not getting along well with peers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). As stated by Fabiano et al. (2013), classroom implications include a need for multiple prompts to begin a task, multiple reminders to remain on task, disturbing peers, disrupting classroom instructional environments, encountering academic challenges, and trouble following classroom rules.

In addition to struggling with ADHD, children with ADHD may present with multiple challenges or psychiatric comorbidities (Hutchinson et al., 2016). The severity of the impact of cognitive and behavioral dysfunction and the severity of inattentiveness and hyperactivity are other factors that require consideration. Each student with ADHD is an individual and has individualized ADHD symptoms. Silk et al. (2019) reported the frequency and intensity of each symptom also varies.

Attention Difficulties

Distractibility and short attention span are characteristics of children with ADHD (Wender & Tomb, 2016). Some examples of attention difficulties include attending to a task for a short period before moving on to another task, interrupting another person's speaking, not listening to directions, making careless mistakes, or requiring 1:1 attention to complete tasks (Wender & Tomb, 2016). Inattention and attention difficulty negatively

impact reading, writing, and mathematics achievement (NoackLeSage et al., 2019). Sasser et al. (2016) declared although there are many characteristics associated with ADHD, inattentiveness is one of the characteristics that persists and does not decline with age.

Hyperactivity

Children with ADHD may present with hyperactivity. Hyperactivity presents as extreme activity and excessive energy (Wender & Tomb, 2016). Some examples are being always on the go or touching everything. Fidgeting, shuffling feet, and squirming when expected to sit still are some observable features of hyperactivity. Although hyperactivity may be prevalent in children with ADHD, it often declines as children age (Sasser et al., 2016). According to Silk et al. (2019), students with ADHD and hyperactivity could be described as "does not listen" or "easily distracted" (p. 4).

Impulsivity

Impulsivity or poor impulse control is another characteristic of children with ADHD (Wender & Tomb, 2016). An example of impulsivity is when a child acts without thinking. The child may hit, kick, or break items. The child does not think through the consequences of an action. Impulsivity, as with hyperactivity, also declines with age (Sasser et al., 2016). High levels of hyperactivity and impulsivity are associated with more severe classroom disruptions; maladaptive behaviors; and negative communication with parents, teachers, and peers. Students with ADHD acting impulsively have fewer opportunities to learn and develop social competencies, which increases the likelihood of social and emotional challenges including patterns of disengagement, social isolation, and alienation (Sasser et al., 2016). Silk et al. (2019) stated that "does not listen" or

"interrupts" (p. 4) are terms often used as a description of students with ADHD with impulsivity observed.

Sensory Processing

Children with ADHD may struggle with sensory processing (Shimizu et al., 2014). Sensory processing includes assimilation, processing, and organizing appropriate responses to information or stimuli. Children with ADHD may struggle to regulate their responses to sensory input. The difficulty with sensory processing may manifest as under-responsivity, sensory seeking, or over-responsivity. Under responsivity refers to poor reactions to stimuli and may cause children to appear lethargic, lacking interest, unenthusiastic, or passive. Sensory seeking refers to a search for stimuli that may present as constantly moving, seeking more intense sensation, and engaging in activities that provide intense stimuli. Over-responsivity refers to intolerance of stimuli, which may appear as distraction by stimuli or a more aggressive response (Shimizu et al., 2014). Students with ADHD who have sensory processing challenges may not be able to adapt to daily tasks, interact with their environments, and appropriately participate in social or school-related activities (Shimizu et al., 2014). Benzing et al. (2018) claimed ADHD is a highly prevalent disorder in childhood impacting both men and women.

Thought Disorder

Thought disorder is an unusual or dysfunctional way of thinking that can be a cause of dysfunction in several aspects of functioning (Hutchinson et al., 2016). Hutchinson et al. (2016) found thought disorder is three times more likely to present in children with ADHD than in children who are developing typically. Formal thought disorder includes disturbances in thought, communication, and language, which could be

associated with social impairments, deficits in cognitive abilities, and impairments in personal functioning (Faruk et al., 2022). Understanding symptoms of thought disorders in children can help with developing targeted interventions.

Academic Achievement and ADHD

Academic achievement is multidimensional and is comprised of attitudes, learning behaviors, motivation to learn, and academic skills (Colomer et al., 2017). Executive functioning, defined as the ability to self-regulate and use cognitive processes to direct behavior toward goal attainment, supports academic achievement. A deficit in executive functioning hinders academic achievement (Colomer et al., 2017). Academic underachievement has been associated with long-term consequences (NoackLeSage et al., 2019). Decreased intellectual quotient and academic achievement deficits have been associated with psychological disorders, including ADHD. In addition to verbal comprehension being a predictor of difficulties with reading and writing, the symptom of inattentiveness also is a significant predictor of academic underachievement (NoackLeSage et al., 2019). Colomer et al. (2017) stated children with ADHD are at risk of academic underachievement when compared to typically developing peers.

DuPaul et al. (2016) identified reading and math achievement impairments and interpersonal skill challenges for students with ADHD. Reading impairments and low reading performance for students with ADHD are identifiable in early elementary school. Math and interpersonal skill impairments and related performance vary as students with ADHD grow and develop (DuPaul et al., 2016). Students with ADHD and academic challenges require additional support. DuPaul et al. (2016) affirmed students with ADHD

need early screening, identification of academic difficulties, and early and ongoing interventions to increase school readiness and school functioning.

Learning behaviors impact students with ADHD (Colomer et al., 2017). Students with ADHD are less likely to engage in challenging tasks or work independently to complete tasks, lack motivation, and have less ability to focus on tasks compared to typically developing peers (Colomer et al., 2017). These challenges can be related to poor learning behaviors and lack of motivation, which ultimately impact academic achievement.

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Difficulties

Emotional difficulties such as irritability, outbursts, and dysregulation are challenges associated with ADHD (Sasser et al., 2016). Students with ADHD exhibit impairments in emotional competencies (e.g., emotional understanding, emotional reactivity, and emotional regulation; Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Emotional understanding is knowledge of personal and other people's emotions. School-aged students with ADHD are less accurate in labeling emotions and matching faces portraying emotions, have limited emotional vocabulary, and are less able to verbalize their emotions or the emotions of others (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Emotional reactivity is an emotional expression that may include frequent and intense emotional expression. Emotional regulation is the process of how and when individuals experience and express emotions (Lugo-Candelas et al., 2017). Parents of children with ADHD and students with ADHD have reported emotional regulation is challenging. When comparing students with ADHD to typically developing peers, the students with ADHD have reported increased frustration during a task that impacted their cognitive performance.

According to Lugo-Candelas et al. (2017), students with ADHD also reported they were less able to regulate emotions throughout the day.

Social impairment is a component of ADHD. Some social challenges include anxiety and mood disorders (Sasser et al., 2016). Symptoms associated with anxiety may lead to underachievement, as the symptoms may distract students during instruction or lead to school avoidance (NoackLeSage et al., 2019). Attentional dysfunction, mood instability, and anxiety characteristics are evident in preschool-aged children (Hutchison et al., 2016). Furthermore, thought disorder (i.e., an unusual way of thinking) can present in students with ADHD. In a study, preschool-aged students with ADHD were three times more likely to present with a thought disorder than the typically developing comparison group (Hutchison et al., 2016). Hutchinson et al. (2016) maintained that thought disorders may contribute to social dysfunction and poor executive functioning.

Behavioral challenges also have been associated with ADHD. Elevated aggression, temperamental reactivity, impulsive behaviors, and a lack of self-control are some of the behavioral challenges of children with ADHD (Sasser et al., 2016). Lugo-Candelas et al. (2017) stated it is imperative to comprehensively evaluate and study social, emotional, and behavioral challenges when working to develop support and strategies for students with ADHD to become more emotionally competent.

Supports for Children With ADHD

Students with ADHD generally have educational impairments requiring support (Power et al., 2012). Benzing et al. (2018) researched children with ADHD to determine the effects of physical activity on executive functioning inhibition (e.g., responses, controlling attention), switching performance (i.e., changing tasks), and visual working

memory (i.e., retaining and processing information). According to Benzing et al. (2018), there were beneficial effects of acute physical activity (e.g., exercise gaming) on inhibition and switching performance and no significant effect on visual working memory.

Medical Intervention

Medication for ADHD is a form of medical intervention. At the time of this study, almost 8% of children in the United States had been diagnosed with ADHD, and just over half of them reported taking medication to treat their ADHD symptoms (Medication for ADHD and Elementary School Achievement, 2009). There is controversy over whether the medications prescribed control hyperactivity, or if the medications allow children to concentrate on their schoolwork. Despite the controversy related to ADHD medication, Medication for ADHD and Elementary School Achievement (2009) reported that students with ADHD who took medication improved their performance in schoolwork. In Virginia Beach, Carle (2002) found approximately 20% of youth were taking prescription Ritalin; additionally, the number of students diagnosed with ADHD was lower than that percentage. Ritalin is a stimulant that chemically stimulates concentration and helps students with ADHD pay attention and focus. Carle (2000) shared, although there is an educational benefit, there are side effects of medication that include stomachaches, insomnia, and stunted growth.

Rowland et al. (2002) surveyed to determine the prevalence of parent-reported ADHD and parent-reported current use of ADHD medication. Approximately 10% of students had an ADHD diagnosis and approximately 7% received medication to treat ADHD. Rowland et al. (2002) shared that medications reported included stimulants,

stimulants with additional medications, centrally acting adrenergic receptor agents, antidepressants, and mood stabilizers.

Parent and Teacher Training

Family School Success is a training program that has demonstrated behavior interventions are successful for students with ADHD (Power et al., 2012). The Family School Success program has been effective in improving parent–teacher relationships, homework performance, organizational strategies, and parenting behaviors. This support includes family involvement in school. In the program, parents and teachers work together to facilitate a family–school relationship. According to Power et al. (2012), another component of this collaboration includes behavior supports and interventions designed to improve functioning at home and school.

According to Rimestad et al. (2017), parent training is effective in supporting children with ADHD based on a parental assessment, but there is a need for more research to fully understand and investigate the full outcomes of teacher training because not every type of training is effective. For example, when studying a specific student or group of students in particular settings, the teacher training did not achieve notable differences for the children (Rimestad et al., 2017). In addition, an intervention for students with ADHD may be context dependent and not transfer from school to home or home-to-school settings (Rimestad et al., 2017). Moreover, a school intervention may need more time for the benefits of the intervention to become evident. Additional training is needed to support the successful inclusion of students with ADHD, atypical development, and/or behavioral challenges (Rimestad et al., 2017). Rimestad et al. (2017)

asserted there are many variables (i.e., the special education setting, inclusive instruction, and supporting students across settings) warranting additional research.

Supports for Learning

A way to support students with ADHD is to strengthen their engagement in their learning (Colomer et al., 2017). Effective teaching practices include modeling, praising effort, expanding ideas, and expanding actions. Colomer et al. (2017) shared coaching and reinforcement are also strategies to support learning. In addition, sensory strategy and resources to support students in sensory processing and sensory regulation are necessary. Treating the symptoms associated with sensory processing deficiencies can support students with ADHD with learning and engaging in appropriate behaviors (Shimizu et al. 2014). Another way to support students with ADHD is to reduce distractions in the learning environment. Tien et al. (2019) suggested reducing noise disruption and distractions to promote the performance of cognitive abilities and increase the occurrence of academic learning.

Professional Development

Teachers need professional development in the areas of diversity, special needs, subject matter content, and pedagogy to improve effectiveness and job satisfaction (Smet, 2021). For instance, a teacher with a high need for content-specific training, training in instructional practices, or pedagogy who engages in professional development may grow skills and confidence, leading to more job satisfaction. Diversity and special needs professional development can also lead to increased capacity (Smet, 2021). Continuous professional development supports teachers in gaining new content knowledge, teaching resources, and instructional capacity (Saleem et al., 2021). According to Saleem et al.

(2021), mentorship and reflective practices also support teachers throughout their continuous professional development.

Teacher Agency

Teacher agency plays a role in constructing teaching identity. Chung (2023) defined teacher agency as a teacher's capacity to formulate possible actions. Teaching identity includes teacher experiences, thoughts, actions, and goals for the future (Huang, 2021). Educators new to the field of education require more support and training as they develop their skills. In addition, teachers need opportunities to reflect on their practice, challenges, and successes (Huang, 2021). Supporting teachers in developing as professional educators through extensive education (e.g., research-informed teacher education, research-literature practices, and teacher autonomy) leads to higher teacher satisfaction and transformational teaching and learning (Chung, 2023). Collaboration and community help develop teacher agency. Paloniemi et al. (2023) stated teachers who work together toward a common vision, collaborate to determine best practices and procedures, and share pedagogical practices further develop their teacher agency.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the belief that an individual has the knowledge, skills, and capacity to complete a task. In a study by Zelalem et al. (2022), teachers who did not receive formal training on how to meet the needs of diverse learners using differentiation strategies had low self-efficacy; therefore, they did not implement differentiated instruction in their classrooms. Self-efficacy improves when teachers engage in professional learning. For example, an e-learning opportunity for early childhood educators demonstrated a positive change in knowledge, confidence, motivation, and

self-efficacy in the specific topic of the training (Bruijns et al., 2022). Teacher agency refers to a teacher's ability to act in a way to grow and develop as an educator. Self-efficacy is the teacher's belief in their ability or capacity to accomplish a task. Teacher agency and self-efficacy support teachers in improving how they provide instruction to students.

Educational Leadership

Educational leadership has many layers. Site leadership includes the principal as the instructional leader. The principal is the sole decision maker or is in a position of power in the school structure (Niesche et al., 2021). Principals are faced with many managerial or compliance roles that limit their ability to focus on instructional leadership (Niesche et al., 2021). To further examine school leaders, Rehm et al. (2021) engaged in a study to determine the relevance and extent of the social continuum in educational leadership. Elementary principals were less likely to reach out or be sought out by other leaders using offline measures than in-person networking. Leadership at the district, secondary, and elementary levels differed, which created a need for common practices to build leadership capacity, leadership resources, and communication to further the development of human and social capital (Rehm et al., 2021).

Professional development for all site leaders to reflect on current practices, increase abilities, and build capacity is essential. Providing leadership professional development increases leaders' agency and self-efficacy. Stronger leadership can then support teachers in developing their agency and self-efficacy. More effective teacher agency and teacher self-efficacy can then impact the quality of education for students.

Educational leaders can also help support specific populations of students (e.g., students with ADHD) by providing teachers with targeted professional development opportunities.

Summary

Chapter 2 presented research to show individuals with ADHD have additional challenges associated with learning. These challenges may impede the learning of the individual with ADHD and the learning of peers in the classroom. Despite effective classroom instruction and learning support, students with ADHD continue to experience challenges related to social, emotional, behavioral, and academic learning. In addition, professional development and training support are necessary components of supporting teachers as they develop their practice and self-efficacy. In Chapter 3, the methodology of the phenomenological study, terms of research method, research design, instruments, participants, data analysis methods, limitations, and delimitations are presented. This study investigated teachers' experiences and sense of self-efficacy in working with students with ADHD to alleviate the problem of how to meet the additional needs of kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD in elementary classrooms.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This research study was a qualitative phenomenological study. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences and sense of self-efficacy in working with students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to mitigate the problem of how to teach kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD in elementary classrooms. The methodology of the phenomenological study, research method, research design, instruments, participants, data analysis methods, limitations, and delimitations is detailed in the following sections.

Research Method

The methodology of this research study was qualitative. This qualitative study included in-depth interviews to better understand the lived experiences of general and special education teachers who taught students with ADHD in kindergarten and first grade. The interviews were semistructured, and each participant was asked the same questions except for follow-up or probing questions asked to further explore the lived experiences of participants.

Although there were two other research methods, the methodology of this study was qualitative. Qualitative research, such as phenomenology, explores the lived experience of individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore the shared lived experiences of kindergarten and first grade teachers facilitating instruction of students with ADHD. Quantitative research and mixed methods were not selected for this study. Quantitative data would not have answered the research questions of this study nor aligned with the purpose of this study. Rather, quantitative research answers a question such as: how

many teachers attend professional development training on successful educational strategies used when teaching students with ADHD? Mixed-methods studies include qualitative and quantitative methodologies and, although aligned with the purpose of this research, collecting additional quantifiable data would have added both complexity and time to the research. As a first-time researcher, it served the study to use a simpler methodology. In the future, I could design a mixed-methods study to answer the question: How does the frequency of professional development training on differentiation of instructional practices impact teacher perceptions of teaching students with ADHD? The research questions detailed in this study elicited the lived experiences of educators who were teaching or had taught students in kindergarten or first grade with ADHD. Understanding the lived experiences, successes, needs, barriers, and challenges of educators in this study aligned with a qualitative study; therefore, qualitative was the best fit for this study.

Research Design

The research design was a phenomenological study. The research focus was to understand the essence of experiences by describing the essence of a lived phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenological research is used to understand the experience as it is lived (Peoples, 2021). Additionally, making meaning is essential and occurs only in the constraints of the experience (Peoples, 2021). Therefore, I selected a phenomenology design as the research design because this study's purpose was to make meaning of the lived experiences of general and special education teachers when working with students with ADHD. Researching lived experiences allowed for a better understanding of teacher experiences, successes, needs, challenges, and barriers in

teaching students with ADHD in the classroom setting. Lived experiences collected through interviews and analyzed for themes were part of this research design. Phenomenological research was the best fit for this research study. Other qualitative research types considered included grounded theory, ethnography, and case study.

Grounded theory research develops a theory grounded in the views of participants and data from the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research approach explores the social process or action of how people interact to discover categories and connections. Grounded theory research was not aligned with the purpose of this study.

Ethnographic research describes and interprets shared patterns of a culture-sharing group. This research approach includes data collection from extensive time in the field to determine a description of the group and emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach was not appropriate for this research study because it focuses on interviews and observations to determine how the specific population functions in day-to-day activities. Although one can argue that teacher experiences are a shared culture, observing every teacher on a day-to-day basis was not feasible for me.

Case studies provide an in-depth description and understanding of a case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A case study was not appropriate for this study because the approach requires diving deep into one phenomenon based on a specific case, whereas the purpose of this study was to learn about the shared experiences of teachers in different categories (e.g., general education and special education classrooms). Although each research approach provides knowledge to support informed decision making, enhance education practices, and make advancements in the field of education, phenomenological research was the best fit for the specific purpose of this study.

Instruments

I conducted one-on-one interviews via Zoom with each participant. Data collection during the interviews included video recording the interview and note taking during the interview. I used a semistructured interview format where I asked the same open-ended questions to each participant, except for follow-up clarifying or probing questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Topics elicited through the interview process included successes in teaching students with ADHD; challenges or barriers in teaching students with ADHD; and any teacher characteristics that may differentiate successes, barriers, and needs. The interview participants shared any additional information that was not previously shared related to instructional practices used to teach students with ADHD. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. In addition to the initial interview, I conducted additional interviews with the participants as needed. For instance, a follow-up interview could have been used to address gaps in data, misunderstandings, and missing or unclear information (Peoples, 2021). Follow-up interviews provided an additional opportunity to delve deeper into the lived experience of the participant, gather additional information, or clarify information from the original interview.

The interview questions created were based on questions from Panorama Education survey instruments. Panorama Education uses surveys and data analysis to help transform schools. Panorama Education has surveys available for students, teachers, and families. I selected Panorama Education surveys as the basis for my interview questions because they are research-based, open-sourced, and help schools transform to ensure all students have access to high-quality education (see Appendix A).

A pilot of the researcher-created questions in the interview protocol was necessary. The pilot included a small sample of educators. I finalized the semistructured interview questions after pilot feedback. The purpose of piloting interview questions was to ensure questions made sense and to elicit responses related to the research questions. The pilot sample included three educators of primary students to ensure they had experience teaching students in the same age range. Teachers who piloted the questions read all the questions, provided feedback, had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions, and then answered three questions based on their experiences as primary-grade educators teaching students with ADHD.

Participants

Participants consisted of general education and special education K–1 teachers from California and Texas. I selected the recruited participants (i.e., general education and special education teachers of kindergarten to first grade in California or Texas) using purposeful sampling to ensure they met the specific criteria for this study. Purposeful sampling ensured participants selected could discuss the research problem being examined in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All participants had taught kindergarten or first grade for at least 1 year, which was disclosed by participants in a recruitment survey prescreening question. Also, all participants had taught students with ADHD, which was also disclosed by the participant in a recruitment survey prescreening question. I sent email invites containing solicitations for participants and criterion-based questions to ensure only those who qualified were interviewed (see Appendix B).

The sample size was 10 teachers, with half of teachers representing general education teachers. Phenomenological study samples can range in size; however, the

recommended sample size is 3–10 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), sample size guidelines for qualitative research, including phenomenological studies, consist of the collection of extensive detail from participants. Peoples (2021) stated that saturation is the goal of phenomenological studies and suggested a participant range of 8–15 be included in a study. Saturation occurs when, during analysis, no new information occurs that adds to the understanding of the research category (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Saturation of this study occurred when the analysis of the lived experiences shared throughout the interviews of general and special education teachers did not add any new information or categories to further the understanding of the phenomenon. Failure to meet the target sample size in the first round of participant selections would have initiated a second round of selections. This limitation would have triggered the selection of additional participants; however, this step was not needed, as saturation occurred with the first round of participants.

I invited 13 individuals to participate in the study. Twelve agreed to participate in the study; however, two participants withdrew before the interview stage. I invited participants to be part of the study by email and asked them to complete a survey to ensure they met the criteria needed to participate. I conducted interviews and analyzed data collected. Once data saturation occurred and no new information and themes emerged, I ended the recruitment process, and a final number of 10 participants made up this study's sample.

Data Analysis Methods

This section includes a detailed description of the implementation of the data collection, member-checking, and data analysis procedures.

Data Collection

I collected data during semistructured interviews. The study interviews took place via an online Zoom meeting. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded participants of the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary. I asked participants questions about their experiences, successes, challenges, barriers, and needs. During the semistructured interviews, I asked the same questions to all participants, and asked clarifying questions as needed. Some questions were closed-ended (e.g., asking participants to rate their responses on a Likert scale), and other questions were open-ended. Each participant joined the Zoom interview from their house, school, or another location of their choice.

I allotted 30–60 minutes for each interview, and all interviews were completed in that time range. One of the 10 participants requested the interview be conducted in person. I recorded this interview on Zoom using one computer with both the participant and me visible on the screen. I recorded all sessions to allow the participants' nonverbal communication to be viewed as part of the data.

Member-Checking

At every interview, I used hand-written notes to document, and after the interviews, I transcribed all interview recordings. To ensure that I had trustworthy data, each participant had the opportunity to read the transcripts so they could add, correct, delete, or clarify any information to ensure the transcript portrayed their experiences accurately. This process is called member checking (Motulsky, 2021). One participant added more information following the interview. I captured that information via handwritten notes and sent them to the participant again for member checking. Another

participant asked to change an answer to one of the questions with a Likert scale and added additional details, which I captured through email. I asked an additional participant a clarifying question about one of their responses and collected their response through electronic communication.

Data Analysis Procedure

Phenomenological analysis begins with studying interview transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalization is the process of organizing significant statements and experiences that provide an understanding of how the participant experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, analysis of each expression determines if the expression is necessary for understanding the experiences and if the expression can be labeled. Themes are identified by clustering experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I conducted additional readings of each interview to gain any additional understanding of how each interviewee made sense of their experiences.

Data analysis procedures were based on People's (2021) data analysis flow chart where I read the entire transcript, extracted preliminary meaning units, generated final meaning units based on each interview question, developed major themes, and formulated general descriptions. The type of analysis completed was inductive content analysis. Inductive content analysis allowed for meaning to be developed alongside the text as it was being read by building meaning units by clustering and organizing pieces of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

First, I took hand-written notes during the interviews to capture the main ideas being shared. Then, I watched the interview recordings to understand the experiences of the teacher as a whole, and I transcribed the interview recordings. I sent the transcriptions

to each participant via email for member checking. After the participants had the opportunity to check their transcripts, I analyzed the transcripts. After analyzing the transcripts, I watched the interviews again, this time focusing on the use and meaning of nonverbal communication captured during the recorded interview. I added the observed nonverbal communication to my notes.

I read the entire transcript. Then I analyzed the answers to each interview question individually. I started by reading each participant's answer and writing down the main points and what the participant shared about the main point. As I read the next participant's transcript, I would write down any new points in a separate spot and cluster any similar ideas in preliminary meaning units. Once I analyzed all transcripts in this way, I looked for themes based on the final clustered meaning units from the collective responses. Once themes emerged, I documented which teacher demonstrated lived experiences for that theme in my notes. I collected specific experiences of each participant related to each theme and provided them in the findings presented in the following chapter.

Limitations

A limitation associated with phenomenology is researcher bias. Ways to mitigate this bias include allowing all potential respondents to participate in the interview using open-ended questions, maintaining a neutral position, and recording responses for transcription. I kept detailed notes and recordings and accurately recorded data that represented participants' experiences and understanding. Member checking mitigates research bias. Member checking occurred when the participants reviewed, corrected,

deleted, edited, or added to their interviews (Motulsky, 2021). Member checking helped ensure the transcription of the interviews was accurate.

Another limitation was researcher bias during analysis. Using Moustakas's (1994) process of horizontalization of all data limited researcher bias. During this process, I horizontally organized all statements from interviews relevant to the topic or research question, clustered the statements into categories and themes, and finally constructed the meanings and essences of the phenomenon based on participants' experiences. Even so, I included bracketing as an additional check against researcher bias. Bracketing mitigated researcher bias during analysis by helping me ensure an accurate representation of the lived experiences of participants by setting aside personal knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences to demonstrate validity during data collection and analysis (Chan et al., 2013). In addition, reflexivity noted any bias, values, and experiences brought to the research. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), this step includes any experiences with the phenomenon and how experiences potentially may have shaped the interpretations.

In addition, a limitation of interview-style research was ensuring credible interview responses. To mitigate or reduce this limitation of credibility, I selected teachers to participate who worked directly with students with ADHD and taught kindergarten and/or first grade. During participant selection, it was essential to ensure all participants I selected had experienced the studied phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure the confidentiality of participants, I used pseudonyms instead of participants' names, which allowed participants to answer interview questions openly and honestly without fear of repercussion.

Another limitation of this study was the sample size. This study's sample size was 10 participants with half of participants being general education teachers. Participants were special and general education teachers of kindergarten or first-grade students with ADHD. Although a larger sample size could have mitigated this limitation, interviewing until saturation occurred also mitigated the need for a larger sample size. Saturation occurred when no new themes were gained from the analysis of interviews with additional participants.

Delimitations

Purposeful sampling of general education and special education teachers who had at least 1 year of experience teaching kindergarten and first grade students with ADHD was a study delimitation. Purposeful sampling allows researchers the ability to select participants that best help answer the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Peoples (2021) suggested purposive, criterion, or snowball sampling for phenomenological studies. In this study, I used purposeful sampling with the criteria noted. Selecting participants from California and Texas was another delimitation. I selected this geographical boundary to provide opportunities to determine teacher characteristics that differentiate successes, challenges, barriers, and needs. Another delimitation was the choice of data collection instrument for this proposed study. I used semistructured, open-ended interviews that took place over Zoom. I recorded and transcribed the interviews. The interview participants reviewed and had the opportunity to revise transcriptions before data analysis.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study explored teacher experiences and sense of self-efficacy when instructing students with ADHD to determine how to best support teachers in building capacity and agency. The research methods included in-depth interviews. Interviews with special education and general education teachers revealed the lived experiences of educators who taught kindergarten or first grade students with ADHD. Analysis of the interviews uncovered teachers' self-efficacy, successes, challenges, barriers, and needs for teaching kindergarten or first grade students with ADHD.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In Chapter 4, I present the research findings of this qualitative phenomenological study exploring teacher experiences and sense of self-efficacy when instructing students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Presentation of Findings

The findings of this study are included in this section. The findings include participant demographics and the themes that emerged from the data.

Demographics

I collected demographic information during the interviews (e.g., the state where the participants taught, credentials held, highest level of education attained, number of years taught, number of years taught at current school, and whether they taught in a general or special education classroom). I also collected the number of grade levels the participants had taught and how many years they had been at their current sites (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Participants' Demographic Data

Participant	State participant teaches	Credentials held	Highest level of education	Years teaching	General or special education
Teacher A	California	Multiple subject, education specialist	Bachelor	20	Special
Teacher B	California	Multiple subject	Masters	10	General
Teacher C	California	Multiple subject, education specialist	Bachelors	3	Special
Teacher D	Texas	EC to sixth generalist	Masters	17	General
Teacher E	California	Multiple subject	Masters	4	General

Participant	State participant teaches	Credentials held	Highest level of education	Years teaching	General or special education
Teacher F	Texas	EC to fourth generalist, reading recovery certificate	Bachelors	23	General
Teacher G	California	Multiple subject, education specialist, reading certificate	Masters	20	Special
Teacher H	California	Multiple subject, administrative credential	Masters	13	General
Teacher I	California	Education specialist	Masters	7	Special
Teacher J	Texas	CA: Multiple subject, clear education specialist, administrative credential; TX: Generalist, EC through 12 special education, ESL, science of teaching reading	Masters	30	Special

Note. Teacher J had valid and active credentials in Texas and California; however, Teacher J was teaching in Texas at the time of the interview.

Most participants (70%) had master's degrees. Five participants taught special education and the other five taught general education. The number of years they taught at the current site varied from 1–10 years with the number of years teaching ranging from 3–30 years. For this study, I defined novice teachers as teachers who had 0–9 years of

teaching experience and experienced teachers as teacher who had taught for 10 or more years.

Themes

The interviews focused on the lived experiences of educators who were teaching or had taught students in kindergarten and/or first grade with ADHD to determine the successes, barriers, challenges, and needs educators had. Eight themes emerged during the analysis of data: student behaviors in the classroom that impede learning, implementation of supports used in the classroom, need for additional adult support, need for professional development training, lack of tools and resources, insecurity, and meaningful work. Table 4.2 includes data on the themes that emerged during data analysis and which participants addressed each theme.

Table 4.2

Table of Themes

Themes	Participants									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Student behaviors in classroom impeding learning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Implementation of supports used in the classroom	X		X	X	X		X	X		X
Need additional adult support	X	X		X		X			X	
Need administrator support	X		X	X						X
Need professional development training				X	X		X	X	X	

Themes	Participants									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Lack of tools /resources	X				X			X		
Insecurity							X	X	X	
Meaningful work	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. This table demonstrates themes that emerged based on the lived experiences of participants when teaching students with ADHD in kindergarten and first grade. Each X represents a participant who had an experience related to the theme.

As shown in Table 4.2, all participants noted student behaviors in classrooms that impeded the learning of themselves and others as a challenge, and all viewed their profession as meaningful work. The rest of this chapter details the themes that emerged from the analysis.

Student Behaviors in Classroom Impeding Learning

Student behaviors impeding the learning of self and others was a theme that emerged in each interview and emerged often throughout the interviews, with various behaviors noted. Teacher I shared about teaching students with excessive movement. Teacher I stated, “I have students that would be climbing on furniture, running out the door, or just having a difficult time regulating their emotions.” Furthermore, Teacher I discussed questioning herself when students’ behaviors interfered with students attending to the lesson. She recalled questioning, “How do I do this? What do I do? Why can’t I get them to or why can’t I get them to pay attention to what I’m trying to teach them or the objective of the lesson?” Similarly, Teacher A shared about a student who was not

formally diagnosed with ADHD but had ADHD tendencies and mannerisms. Teacher A described an experience teaching this child when the expectation of the class was to sit in a circle on the carpet and stated, “We had to do circle time and this child would not sit down to save his life, so he stood in the back of the class.” Even when the student did participate to a degree from the alternative location, the student did not engage in the actual circle time with their peers. During the interview, Teacher A used facial expressions such as raising her eyebrows and smiling as she described this child’s lack of ability to stay seated. Teacher A’s facial expression appeared as if she were slightly embarrassed when she shared this behavior had become normal for this student, even though it was not the expected classroom behavior. This quote, in addition to the teachers nonverbal communication, is important because it showed the student’s movement being out of the student’s control and impeding learning.

Teacher B shared an experience with a student who was hyper-fixated on a classroom activity, saying, “I have a student currently this year with ADHD, and it is a struggle almost daily to get her to perform up to her abilities because she gets hyper-fixated on an activity and does not like to transition.” This behavior created challenges when it was time to change activities or tasks. The student could not transition well. In addition, this student was not performing to their ability level despite teacher and parent supports. Teacher H described a student with ADHD who lacked body control as someone who was always in motion. Teacher H stated:

> Last year I had a student in my class that I would say had severe ADHD. He was a student that would roll around constantly on the floor. His body would always kind of be moving, his arms, his legs, on the rug with friends like there was no body control. He was also an eater of all the things on the floor, so it was by far one of the toughest students I’ve ever had.

Similar behaviors were noted by Teacher F, who stated:

> I've had the extreme where they cannot sit for any period of time, whether it's on the floor or in a chair. I've had them rolling around on the floor. I've had them literally bouncing off the walls running into the wall and things.

The behaviors noted created a challenge for both the student and their peers to learn.

Another example of behaviors noted in the classroom was described by Teacher G, who articulated behaviors observed such as touching or accidentally hitting others, having difficulty maintaining composure, and lacking self-restraint. Teacher G continued by sharing that she had incoming kindergarten students who "have to learn the whole structure of kindergarten." She stated, "They have to learn to sit at their seats." She shared some students came into school demonstrating difficulty with following classroom routines, expectations, and structures, specifically sharing, "It's super difficult for students who have ADHD to maintain composure and that amount of self-restraint so they don't touch their peers in lines." Behaviors observed by participants prompted the implementation of strategies to support their students with ADHD.

Implementation of Supports

Implementation of supports used in the classroom was another theme that emerged. Teacher E shared she implemented supports for her student with ADHD, including token systems, fidgets, and various spaces around the room to support this student prior to finding a support that had some success. Teacher E stated, "I finally found something that has a moderate success with him." This token system was laminated with Velcro to allow the student choices. The student selected their reward preference and could earn the reward by participating in classroom activities and completing tasks. Teacher E stated:

> He gets to choose and stick on a reward, and his options are Play-Doh, computer time, calm down corner, and a couple different rewards he can stick on, and then he had to earn five stars to get to that point, I never take them away. He just gets to earn them. And I use them for each activity. Each 15- to 20-minute activity, he can earn all five to get the reward.

When describing the token system, Teacher E described using gestures to show how the system was set up for the student and gestured how the student added the Velcro token when they earned it. During the interview, her animated body language while describing this system emphasized her excitement to have learned and implemented a system that supported her student.

Other teachers implemented movement breaks and a flexible learning environments to support students with ADHD. Teacher A stated, "We had to do circle time, and this child would not sit down to save his life, so he stood at the back of the class." Allowing her student with ADHD the option to stand in the back of the room and participate from this alternative location instead of sitting at circle time was a support described by Teacher A. Teacher G shared a successful support of "allowing them [students] to stand up when they are trying to write or do their math." Teacher G found this strategy "to be successful in the classroom so they can get that work done." Other supports implemented included opportunities for movement breaks and relocating to areas around the classroom to provide extra workspace.

Teacher D shared an experience about instructing students with ADHD during science labs and reasoned those students "did a lot better in [her] classroom because [the students] were doing labs and more hands-on, and more things that actively involved them or actively engaged [the students]." This experience was important, as students were participating and engaged in the hands-on learning provided by Teacher D. She felt

this type of learning supported students and was different from the learning in a typical general education classroom, which does not set students with ADHD up for success.

Additional supports participants noted included personalized learning opportunities and the use of site resources and personnel. Teacher E shared that her education specialist provided some tools for her to use with specific students and exposed her to resources and tools she could use when students had additional learning or behavioral needs. Teacher E stated, "Everything I know has come from a specialist who has helped me." Teacher B used social stories to help teach skills needed in the school setting. Teacher B shared the following about the use of social stories in her classroom: "My current student this year has had difficulty making and maintaining friendships, so we brought in a lot of social stories on acceptance and being able to create friend groups, even though we are not all the same." Teacher H provided individualized (i.e., 1:1) instruction to her student with ADHD during small group time to ensure his learning needs were addressed. Teacher H stated:

> He was just needing that personal one-to-one attention, so pulling him into a small group with just me and no one else really gave him that attention, and it allowed him to focus. Writing was a big thing. That was the focus of my school last year. So, in order for him to write an entire paragraph [in] first grade. He was able to do by the end of the year because of that small group, just one-to-one attention, me and him. And I would underline the words for him for each [word]. So here's a word. I would write the whole paragraph on the whiteboard and he would slowly start erasing as he got through.

Teacher H discussed using encouragement and praise, dictation, teacher modeling of writing on a whiteboard, and the skill of underlining the page to provide a visual representation of each word the student needed to write or copy. Teacher A shared she used different tools to support academics. She stated, "For completing their work, I would say chunk it down; they don't have to do everything that a gen ed child or child

without ADHD is doing; give them shortened assignments." She also suggested, "Give them quick little breaks," "alternative seating, "visuals" and "lots of praise." Despite the myriad of strategies used, additional supports from other adults were needed.

A Need for Additional Adult Support

A need for additional adult support was another theme that emerged. Teacher A stated she needed "support from my para ed[ucator]." Teacher B specified support is needed when students behave in an unsafe manner. Teacher B said she needs "support for when a behavior gets out of control." She described her student as "spinning out of control" and the behaviors of "throwing chairs and tossing things over."

Teacher F expressed a need for an additional adult, specifically a behavioral or instructional paraprofessional educator, to support students in the classroom. Teacher F stated:

> You definitely need extra hands and an extra body in the classroom to help manage . . . I have found that times I had an aide in the classroom, it has been a tremendous help to be able to pull that child to the side or take that child on a walk so that the other children can learn and get something out of the lesson.

This insight is significant because it shows the benefit of an additional adult support for the student with ADHD and their peers to ensure learning continued in the classroom. Teacher I had a similar experience, stating:

> It just really helps to have that extra adult that is around, even if they're not around in the moment, but you can call them, and they will come in a minute or 2 and be able to address the situation.

Teacher I shared that when adult support is available, the instruction can refocus and learning can continue. Additional adults can help support the learning of the class or help deescalate the behaviors of the student who is disrupting the learning. When additional adult support is not available, learning instruction becomes adversely impacted, as the

teacher needs to focus on the student disrupting the learning. Overall, participants shared that more adult support is needed, but such support requires administrator support, as well.

A Need for Administrator Support

Administrator support was another theme in this study. Teacher C described needing administrators to provide backup with student and family challenges and support during the instructional day, as needed, due to behaviors that impede learning. Teacher A also mentioned needing administrator support. She shared needing the administration to create a "school environment that promotes special education kids to succeed." She needed administrators to not use special education as an excuse for student behaviors or academic challenges by "saying he/she is special ed." She also discussed wanting administrators to get involved to "make sure everyone follows the accommodations on the student's IEP." Teacher J described needing administrative support as well. Teacher J said, "I need for my administrator to know that I know what I'm doing when I'm working with these kids. And when I ask for things that I need them." She discussed wanting administrators to support her teaching efforts by providing resources when resources are requested. Teacher B also expressed a need for administrator support, and shared:

> I need administrator support when behavior gets out of control because I have 20 other students that I have to teach and keep safe when this child is spinning out of control, throwing chairs, and tossing things over. I need administrator support quickly.

According to Teacher B, a quick response is needed to help deescalate situations so that the teacher, who has 20 other students, regains the ability to keep all students safe and maintain a structured learning environment. These teachers all believed administrators

have the power to make changes to empower teachers in their goals to reach every student. Part of their support could come in the form of professional development.

A Need for Professional Development Training

A need for professional development training emerged from the content analysis. Teacher E stated, “I feel like I need more resources and training.” She also shared, “I didn’t feel prepared through my gen ed teaching credential program, so I have had to learn along the way.” Further sharing, Teacher E said this “trial by fire” process took time, as once she had the tools, it took time to determine what would work. Despite the tools already gained, previous experiences from which to pull, and the teacher’s effort, Teacher E noted the need for further training and more resources to use in the classroom setting. This sentiment was also expressed by Teacher G, who questioned how to implement all the things learned from classes, seminars, reading, and conferences. She wanted to conduct observations of real-life classroom teachers who put practices into action and implemented strategies successfully. She stated, “I’d really like to see a classroom where these techniques that I learned during conferences, different classes, and different seminars [are happening] in action . . . see it in the classroom being utilized and being successful.” This is important, as it shows teachers need to see what they are learning being applied in real-life classrooms with students. Teachers need to learn theory; implementation of strategies; and practice f new ideas, techniques, and supports.

Teacher I shared that she viewed her teaching from a video she had collected during her induction program. In this video, she saw her “cute students literally climbing all over everything.” Her student was climbing on furniture and not attending to the instruction. Despite Teacher I’s efforts to instruct and get her student to attend to the

lesson activity, she shared that she did not know how to support this student or why she could not get the student to pay attention. She shared, “At the time, it was just over my head.” Teacher H shared, “I am never sure how to approach each student that I’ve had that has ADHD, and it’s not a lot of training that I’ve had.” She also stated, “It’s tricky because to me, I see them as active and moving, so I try to find moving supports, and I’m sure there are other ways that I could be helping them.” Teacher H articulated a lack of training and understanding of how to select the appropriate support and activity. Additional professional development training is needed to break down academics for students with ADHD.

Professional development training was a need evident from the participants’ responses. Teacher J expressed general education teachers’ lack of understanding of students with ADHD. Teacher J stated a challenge entails “the general education teachers who don’t understand these kids who are driven by a motor and they think that they’re just squirming in their seats because they’re trying to cause ruckus in the classroom, but they can’t help it.” Comparably, Teacher D observed that expectations in general education classrooms do not set up students with ADHD for success. Teacher D explained:

> I got to see that a lot of kids that struggle with their ADHD, especially the hyperactivity parts of it, during class did a lot better in my classroom because we were doing labs and more hands-on and more things that actively involved them or actively engaged in comparison to their general education classroom. So, it was kind of eye-opening because I realized that our general education classroom are not setting up kids for success when they have ADHD because the expectations are not ones they can meet.

A need that emerged was more training in instructional pedagogy and activities to ensure the classrooms are setting students up for success. The data also indicated all these needs showed an overall lack of tools and resources for these teachers.

Lack of Tools and Resources

A lack of tools and/or resources was a theme that emerged from the analysis. Despite having some tools, Teacher E shared she needed to learn more. She felt she needed more resources and training. Teacher E shared:

> I didn't even know about the particular token board I'm using right now [that] our education specialist made for me. So, I have been exposed to more tools, but it's been a lot of, "I have this issue, what are some things I can try to use?" I was not prepared ahead of time. It's been kind of a trial by fire.

She described seeking help as challenges occurred; however, as a general education teacher, she did not feel like the general education credential program prepared her for teaching students with ADHD. Teacher A shared a similar challenge by stating, "I just didn't have enough tool in my box nor enough resources." Teacher H also communicated her needs for more tools or resources to use. She explained, "I am never sure how to approach each student that I've had that has ADHD . . . I'm sure there's other ways that I could be helping." This sentiment showed a desire to support students and a lack of resources and tools to apply when teaching a student with ADHD. Teacher H further explained, "I need to look at how somebody would break down the curriculum to give it to a student like that in small chunks, and how to deal with hyperness [*sic*] and academics together." More specifically, she discussed needing supports and strategies for students with ADHD that would help with increasing appropriate behaviors, decreasing off-task behaviors, and supporting growth and development academically. Overall, with the needs for the different supports presented, an underlying teacher insecurity surfaced.

Insecurity

Insecurity tied to teachers' sense of self-efficacy emerged as a theme. Teacher I shared she felt overwhelmed and expressed her insecurity about her teaching. She described her teaching students with ADHD as being "in over [her] head." She questioned herself, her ability to teach, and why she could not get her students to pay attention and learn. Teacher H also expressed insecurity about how to select appropriate supports and activities, as she did not have training on how to support students with ADHD. Teacher H shared:

> I am never sure how to approach each student that I've had that has ADHD, and it's not a lot of training that I've had in that. So, it's tricky because, to me, I see them as active and moving. So, I try to find active and moving supports for them. And I'm sure there's other ways that I could be helping them, especially academically; like how do I break down the academics for them.

Teacher H observed her students being active and in movement. She recalled selecting active and movement-type instructional activities; however, she was unsure if this was the correct support or if there were better supports. Furthermore, she did not feel she was able to determine how to best meet the physical movement or academic needs of her students. Teacher G shared her insecurities, noting:

> I think the barrier is the misunderstanding, and for myself, is the lack of knowledge as far as what really is the best way to teach them. I know there are certain techniques like giving them space, but sometimes this seems like there's just another barrier that I'm not understanding . . . I just think there's a missing piece, and I just don't know what it is.

Teacher G expressed insecurities, which included a lack of knowledge of instructional practices, learning activities, and learning environments to support the various needs of students with ADHD. Regardless of how teachers felt, every participant felt their work was meaningful.

Meaningful Work

Teaching is meaningful work, which was a belief all participants shared. Both verbal and nonverbal communication demonstrated teachers' passion for teaching and helping students grow and develop academically, socially, and emotionally. Teacher I shared her work mattered a lot. She said, "I've poured into their lives, and I thought about what I would say to encourage them, and I was very intentional to try to be a positive person in their lives." She concluded by stating, "It does matter to me." Teacher C described her work as very meaningful. Teacher C said, "It's very meaningful seeing our students' little wins and seeing them get more used to school and the school's setting." Teacher C also felt her work is important because it requires building relationships with parents, sharing student progress, and building students up. Teaching is about seeing the positives and helping the students oversee their own successes. Teacher A agreed her work is extremely meaningful and stated, "If you make a difference, it's fantastic, and I am always learning so, yes, very meaningful."

Teacher J also felt her work is very meaningful. She stated, "I think it's very meaningful because I think if I wasn't going to do it, who is going to do it." She also felt that she brings a "whole different toolbox" based on her experiences and education. Teacher E agreed her work is very meaningful. She said, "I would like to think of it as we are impacting another generation of people, and I want to help the kids be the most exceptional version of themselves." This was important, as she described supporting students as they grow and develop in academics, self-confidence, and conduct, and helping them in their journeys to become functional adults who could be successful in life

and in whatever they chose to do. She saw her work as molding students in a positive way for school and life.

Teacher F shared that her work is very meaningful. One example she provided was when her student applied skills and strategies in a new learning activity. Specifically, Teacher F stated, her work is meaningful "especially with instructing with reading when you have a student, that lightbulb goes off, and they finally start implementing the strategy or skill you've been teaching them, and they do it on their own." She explained it is the "best feeling" when a student independently use a strategy that was taught. Teacher D agreed it is very meaningful being a teacher and stated, "Being a teacher is a very important job. If you are hitting what you need to hit as a teacher, you're really affecting a lot of little lives." Teacher B shared it is "extremely meaningful." Teacher H agreed that teaching was meaningful work, and stated:

> It is tremendously meaningful that I have the honor and ability to make an impact on a small child's life that is basing the foundations for the rest of their lives, so I feel like I have a huge impact that I can make, and it is very important that I do the best I can.

The meaningfulness of teaching was described by each participant based on their lived experiences building relationships, supporting student achievement, and providing learning opportunities.

Summary

All participants shared their experiences and defined their successes, challenges, barriers, and needs when teaching students in kindergarten or first grade with ADHD. Although each teacher had unique experiences, the following themes emerged: student behaviors in the classroom impeding learning, implementation of supports used in the classroom, need additional adult support, need professional development training, lack of

tools or resources, insecurities, and meaningful work. In Chapter 5, I include a discussion of the findings and conclusions, application to leadership, and recommendations for future action.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the research was to explore teachers' experiences and sense of self-efficacy in working with students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Eight themes emerged as teachers shared their successes, challenges, barriers, and needs when teaching students in kindergarten to first grade with ADHD. In this chapter, I discuss how the findings answer the research questions and connect to the problem statement. I also make recommendations about the applicability of this research in school practice and suggest other avenues of research.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Teachers discussed their experiences teaching students with ADHD in kindergarten and first grade. I explored their successes, challenges, barriers, and needs through several interview questions. The findings of this study aligned with the literature on teaching students with ADHD. Silk et al. (2019) found that inattentiveness or hyperactivity/impulsivity, distractibility, not listening, difficulty sustaining attention, and interrupting are symptoms of ADHD. These behaviors were brought up by the participants in this study as they described the challenges they faced. Saleem et al. (2021) found continued professional development supports teachers in gaining new content knowledge, teaching resources, and instructional capacity. This finding was echoed by the participants in this study, who shared they need additional training to meet the needs of their kindergarten and first grade students with ADHD. In the next section, I discuss how the themes and findings answer the research questions posed in this study.

Research Questions (RQs)

The general findings of this study showed all teachers experienced successes and challenges, faced barriers, and had needs when teaching students with ADHD in kindergarten or first-grade classrooms.

RQ1: What Is the Lived Experience of Educators Who Are Teaching Students in Kindergarten/First Grade Who Have ADHD?

Each participant shared their lived experience as a teacher of students with ADHD. Although the experiences were unique to each participant, eight themes developed when analyzing the data: student behaviors in the classroom that impede learning, implementation of supports used in the classroom, need for additional adult support, need for administrator support, need for professional development training, lack of tools and resources, insecurity, and meaningful work. Table 5.1 includes a visual guide matching the themes to the subquestions connected to Research Question 1.

Table 5.1

Research Question 1 Subresearch Questions and Themes

Research question	Theme
RQ 1a: What successes have educators experienced with teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?	Implementation of supports
RQ 1b: What barriers/challenges have educators experienced with teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?	Student behaviors in classroom that impede learning; lack of tools and resources; insecurity
RQ 1c: What are the needs of educators who teach students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?	Need for additional adult support; need for administrator support; need for professional development training

Note. The table shows the themes that answered each subresearch question for RQ1.

RQ1a: What Successes Have Educators Experienced with Teaching Students in Kindergarten/First Grade Who Have ADHD? Teachers shared their successes when teaching students in kindergarten and first grade with ADHD. Data clustered around the theme of implementation of supports shed light on the successes the participants experienced in their teaching. Novice teachers shared they had successes that relied on outside support, instructional strategies, and resources. For example, Teacher I, a novice special education teacher who worked in California, shared one success was the ability to provide movement breaks to a first-grade student who had regular meltdowns. This strategy allowed the lesson in the classroom to continue when the student was having trouble regulating. The success relied on the support of an additional person.

The use of fidgets and flexible seating also supported students in attending to a lesson and represented other strategies that led to success. For example, Teacher C, a novice special education teacher who taught in California, discussed providing supports that led the student to follow the classroom expectations of sitting on the carpet and being engaged (e.g., raising hand, answering questions) in the lesson.

Further, using reward systems supported increased student engagement and task completion, two hallmarks of success. Teacher E, a novice general education teacher who taught in California, discussed using a token system. With this support, students had moderate levels of success defined as working on or completing a classroom task in the classroom, which was an improvement from the beginning of the year.

Experienced teachers attributed their successes to the implementation of instructional, academic, social, and behavioral supports. They described implementing instructional and academic strategies (e.g., providing instruction in smaller chunks,

shortened assignments, peer or group work, individualized instruction, and visuals). Teacher G, an experienced special education teacher in California, shared an academic success strategy that included allowing her students the opportunity to stand while completing their academic work. Teacher H recalled providing one-on-one instruction, and with this support, the student was successful in the academic area of writing.

Experienced teachers also found success by implementing social and behavioral strategies (e.g., social–emotional learning, breaks, standing while working, acknowledging positive behaviors, incentives, and social stories) in their classrooms. Teacher A, an experienced California special education teacher, shared a social success, which was the ability to build trust with students in the general education setting by having students engage in a task with peers. Teacher B shared her student had difficulty making and maintaining friendships, so this teacher used social stories on acceptance and creating friend groups. Her whole class learned even though they were not all the same, they could bridge the gaps and be friends. Teacher F described her student as not keeping their hands to themself, walking around the room during circle time, and being all over the place. Teacher F used incentives to challenge the student to comply with sitting during circle time with hands to self.

Zagona et al. (2017) researched teacher experiences and preparation to better understand teachers' knowledge, ideas, strategies, practices, and perspectives when developing support for students with ADHD. Similarly, strategies participants in this study implemented in the classroom led to student success in behavior, academics, and socialization. These experiences of success can be used to further develop support for students with ADHD.

RQ1b: What Barriers/Challenges Have Educators Experienced with Teaching Students in Kindergarten/First Grade Who Have ADHD? Participants expressed barriers and challenges they had experienced. Data clustered around the themes of lack of tools and resources and insecurities illuminated the barriers teachers faced, whereas the theme of student behaviors in the classroom that impede learning illustrated the challenges teachers faced.

Barriers. As in Mamabolo et al.'s (2021) study, participants in this study also described a lack of understanding of the resources needed to support learners with disabilities. Novice teachers shared a lack of adult support was a barrier that negatively impacted the classroom learning environment. Other barriers included a lack of knowledge, resources, and understanding of how to use instructional strategies to differentiate and individualize instruction for students in kindergarten and first grade with ADHD. For example, a novice general education teacher, Teacher E, shared each student is so different, it is difficult to figure out what supports each student needs. She described having to use a lengthy trial-and-error method to figure out what motivates the student, what triggers the student has, what is helpful, what the student struggles with, and how to encourage the student to stay on task and complete work.

Experienced teachers also expressed a lack of understanding about students' behavioral needs, uncertainty on how to approach students, and a lack of training and resources as barriers. Such uncertainty lowered teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to effectively teach students with ADHD. Teacher A shared a barrier of not knowing enough, not having the tools in their toolbox, and not having enough resources from which to pull. Teacher G, an experienced special education teacher, also noted a lack of

knowledge about the best way to teach students with ADHD beyond techniques like additional space or movement breaks. Another experienced general education teacher, Teacher H, shared she is never sure how to approach each student with ADHD, does not know how to find supports, and does not know the best way to break down academics to support students with ADHD. Further, she shared there is a lack of training for teachers. This finding aligned with Hapsari et al.'s (2020) study, which found elementary school teachers lacked knowledge about ADHD, which impacted their ability to teach students with ADHD needing behavioral, academic, and relational support.

Challenges. Experienced teachers discussed facing challenges when student behaviors impede learning. Students not following school expectations was a challenge shared by an experienced teacher. Teacher G shared a challenge is how to ensure students' behavioral needs are met when the need becomes evident. For example, she described scheduling movement breaks, but they are not necessarily available at other times when needed. Learning environments not being conducive to the learning style of a student with ADHD was another challenge discussed by Teacher G.

Additional challenges participants identified extended beyond school control (e.g., students who were prescribed medication coming to school unmedicated). An experienced general education teacher, Teacher B, shared challenges with students who were medicated and could not get medications due to a pharmaceutical shortage. An experienced general education teacher in Texas shared an additional challenge that kindergarten-aged students are not officially diagnosed with ADHD, even if they manifest behaviors that point to such a diagnosis.

RQ 1c: What Are the Needs of Educators Who Teach Students in Kindergarten/First Grade Who Have ADHD? All teachers articulated a need based on their lived experiences while teaching students with ADHD. Teacher needs clustered into the themes of need for additional adult support, need for administrator support, and need for professional development training.

Need for Additional Adult Support. Teachers described needing paraprofessional support. Teacher F, an experienced general education teacher in Texas, said she needs additional adult support in the form of extra hands and an extra body in the classroom to support students, specifically a behavior paraprofessional educator or instructional paraprofessional educator in the classroom to take a student for walks or a break to ensure other students' learning could continue. Teacher D, an experienced general education teacher in Texas, shared needing extra adult support to provide students with more teacher attention they needed to be successful. Teachers also discussed wanting parental support. Teacher J, an experienced special education teacher in Texas, said they need buy-in from parents, who understand their child. Additional adult support was a need expressed by both novice and experienced teachers.

Need for Administrator Support. Novice and experienced teachers also discussed needing administrator support. Teacher C, a novice special education teacher in California, described needing administrator support and backup. Teacher J, an experienced special education teacher, expressed needing both administrative understanding and support. Teacher B, an experienced general education teacher in California, also shared they need administrator support quickly to deal with significant behaviors (e.g., throwing chairs, spinning out of control, throwing things) to ensure a

safe, structured learning environment. As with adult support, administrator support is needed in the general education and special education learning environments.

Need for Professional Development Training. Teachers expressed they need training on developing various lesson activities and implementation of instructional approaches. Novice teachers discussed needing knowledge of best practices in developing engaging lessons. Teacher I, a novice special education teacher in California, said they need knowledge of how to shape lessons to fully engage students physically in the lesson. Teacher E, a novice general education teacher in California, shared wanting more resources and training. She had been exposed to and used what the education specialist provided. She was willing to implement new strategies, but she did not know what supports were needed or how to implement them.

Experienced teachers also expressed the need for professional development training. Teacher G, an experienced special education teacher in California, discussed needing to see a classroom where techniques she had learned from classes, conferences, seminars, or books were being implemented and used successfully. Teacher H, an experienced general education teacher in California, needed to know what supports to use that would be helpful for students with ADHD. She needed further training on how to break down the curriculum to give it to students in chunks, how to deal with hyperactive behaviors and academics together, and what clear expectations teachers should have for students with ADHD. Teacher A, an experienced special education teacher in California, needed to learn about different activities to provide for students with ADHD. Teachers expressed their need for professional development training to increase teaching capacity by building skill sets, and this finding aligns with other research (Saleem et al., 2021;

Smet, 2021) that found professional development and training supported teachers in gaining content knowledge and increasing instructional capacity.

RQ2: Are There Teacher Characteristics That Differentiate Successes, Barriers, and Needs?

Teacher characteristic data included: state of teaching assignment, credentials held, highest level of education, years of teaching experience, and teaching assignment (i.e., special education or general education). Credential or certification type was also collected to ensure all teachers were fully certified in their state of residence. Through analysis, I found the highest level of education or the state of teaching assignment did not differentiate successes, barriers, or needs. When analyzing the specific interview responses, years of experience, credential type, and teaching position differentiated the examples and experiences that were shared.

RQ2a: What Are the Teacher Characteristics That Differentiate Successes, Barriers, and Needs? Although educators shared experiences that clustered around similar themes, the data suggested years of experience, credential type, and teaching position were teacher characteristics that differentiated types of successes, barriers, and needs.

RQ2b: How Are the Successes, Barriers, and Needs Differentiated? Successes were differentiated based on years of experience. Novice teachers shared their successes were dependent on outside support and a combination of instructional strategies and resources. Teachers used terms such as “movement breaks,” “fidgets,” and “token systems” when describing their successes. Conversely, experienced teachers shared their successes occurred when instructional and behavioral supports were implemented in the

classroom settings. They described one-on-one instruction, small groups, social–emotional lessons, social stories, visuals, and instructional strategies.

The examples and experiences are what differed for barriers and needs. For example, both novice and experienced teachers described insecurities during the interviews in the form of being unsure of the best ways to support students with diverse learning needs or lacking the capacity to teach students with ADHD. However, one experienced special education teacher, Teacher J, demonstrated high self-efficacy and a belief that she understood her students, their needs, and how to best educate them. Her need was for the parents and administrators to trust her ability and support the educational activities, structures, and plans she set for her students. Her training and years of experience included teaching in both states (i.e., California and Texas) and holding credentials for both general education and special education.

Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement

In the United States, the prevalence of children with ADHD is approximately 9.4%–14% (Liu, 2020). One third of children are diagnosed before age 6 and the median age for diagnosis was age 7 (Liu, 2020). The general problem was students with ADHD have additional learning needs that a general education classroom environment cannot always provide. This structure impedes the learning of students with ADHD and their peers when the students with ADHD are off task, acting out, defiant, or impulsive. Further, students with ADHD need a specific instructional plan and support to learn in general education K–1 classroom settings. This creates a problem because K–1 general education teachers often lack knowledge of effective instructional strategies to instruct and support students with ADHD in general education settings. To explore what supports

may be most effective to meet these students' needs, this study sought to uncover the lived experiences of general education and special education teachers in terms of their successes, barriers, and needs in the context of teaching students with ADHD.

I found general education teachers and special education teachers had similar needs when working with students with ADHD. Teachers discussed needing support when students' behaviors in the classroom impeded their learning and the learning of others. Teachers needed additional support implementing successful instructional and behavioral supports used in the classroom. A common need that emerged was for additional adult support. The teachers shared such support is needed when students with ADHD manifest behaviors that impede learning. Another common theme was a need for administrator support with behaviors, issues, and resources. Furthermore, a need for professional development training emerged, including seeing practices in action, learning when and how to implement strategies, and knowing what strategies to use for different students.

Analysis and Key Theories

Teacher self-efficacy and motivation may be hindered or strengthened, as self-efficacy is a personal belief in one own capacity that influences a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Bandura, 1995). High self-efficacy supports the understanding of successes, challenges, and barriers and the motivation to learn more, do better, and apply new learning to areas of need (Bandura, 1995). Some teachers voiced insecurities when teaching students with ADHD. For example, Teacher E said she only feels slightly knowledgeable and somewhat effective when teaching students with ADHD. A lack of training was another reason teachers felt insecure about teaching students with ADHD.

Bruijns et al. (2022) found self-efficacy improved, as evidenced by positive change in knowledge, confidence, motivation, and self-efficacy, when participants were trained in a specific topic. Similarly, Teacher G shared she has attended conferences, classes, and seminars to learn strategies and still needed more professional development to be able to put what she learns into practice to increase her self-efficacy. Teacher E also stated she needs more professional development and resources to use when she teaches students with ADHD. Self-esteem needs also support a person with the desire for achievement, which is a motivator to learn, develop skills, and increase effectiveness (Maslow, 1943). Understanding that a person can grow and develop their skills and efficacy directly ties into the need for additional educational opportunities for teachers to develop and hone their instructional practices.

Application to Leadership

The absence of broad policies of support on increasing teacher effectiveness when instructing students with ADHD showed a problem with leadership at the district and site levels. To mitigate this problem, I proposed to research and understand the lived experiences of general education and special education teachers who worked with kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD. The data gathered provided knowledge on the successes, barriers, challenges, and needs experienced by novice and experienced teachers across two states. The study also addressed teacher self-efficacy. The findings support a need for the development of teacher training focused on supporting students with ADHD. Leaders in the field of education (e.g., teachers, site administrators, and district administrators) can use the information gained throughout this study to seek or create educational courses, professional development, resources, and supports to ensure

students with ADHD have access to high-quality instruction that meets their learning needs.

Recommendations for Action

The development of specific education courses or sections in education courses to support teachers in learning instructional practices and resources to engage students with ADHD in grade-level appropriate lessons as a component of the teacher preparation classes is one recommendation for action geared toward teacher-preparation programs. These courses would help teachers build their knowledge base and learn about tools to support students with ADHD prior to their student teaching or 1st year of teaching.

Another recommendation for action is for school district personnel, educational leaders, and educational professional development creators to develop and implement high-quality trainings for novice and experienced teachers. Braude and Dwarika (2020) revealed teachers who were extensively trained were more confident in understanding and identifying students with ADHD compared to teachers who were not formally trained. Both novice and experienced teachers teaching special education and general education in this study stated their need for more professional development training. Research has affirmed that training plays a critical role in supporting and teaching students with ADHD. Participants in this study echoed their need for that; therefore, I recommend ongoing coaching, mentoring, and support to ensure teachers can implement their learning in their classrooms to support their students with ADHD.

I recommend developing and providing professional development training that is presented in bite-sized segments and focuses on supporting kindergarten and first-grade students with ADHD. This training would be a series of professional development

sessions with opportunities to lesson plan and make items to use in the classroom, followed by implementation, debriefing, and feedback. The first session would be on setting up the environment to support the students. This would include setting up sensory strategies (e.g., calming corner, breathing zone, flexible seating, fidgets, sensory tools). The next session would be on how to include academic support to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. This session would include chunking assignments, hands-on learning opportunities, use of graphic organizers, interactive notebooks (with picture/drawing options), choice in how students show mastery and demonstrate understanding, and creating multimodal lessons. The last session would be an opportunity to collaboratively plan using what they have learned. Following this training, I recommend check-ins, observations, mentoring, and ongoing coaching to ensure teachers feel supported as they hone their craft of teaching students with ADHD.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on California- and Texas-based teachers who had taught students in kindergarten or first grade with ADHD. One recommendation is to expand this research to other grade levels and geographical areas. This study could be replicated with teachers outside of the states of Texas and California using primary and secondary grades to examine successes, challenges, barriers, and needs of teachers who teach students who have ADHD. Similar findings from data gathered from other populations would allow for more generalization of the findings in this study. A mixed-methods research design would allow student achievement data to be collected and analyzed, in addition to teacher interviews. Qualitative data would include semistructured teacher interviews regarding strategies employed in the classroom to promote academic success

in the area of reading for students who have ADHD. Quantitative data would include academic reading scores including overall reading level, fluency score based on a rubric, and percentages of words correctly read aloud at the beginning of the study and after the teacher has employed reading strategies to support students who have ADHD. The pre- and post-reading test scores could be compared to determine if growth was made based on reading strategies employed. The independent variable would be the reading strategy implemented. The dependent variable would be students' reading test scores. The qualitative and quantitative data gathered and analyzed would enhance understanding of the phenomenon. Such an undertaking would also provide another layer of data when answering the research questions and support the education field in learning more about successful instructional practices for students who have ADHD. Further research on this topic would be useful in illuminating the success, challenges, barriers, and needs in the educational system.

Another avenue would be to expand this research to include autism, another neurological developmental disability. A suggestion for further research is a case study on a teacher of students with ADHD and a teacher of students with autism. A case study would allow for an in-depth analysis of a case (e.g., a program, event, activity, or process) as it pertains to one or more individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). An in-depth analysis and comparison of instructional practices, support, prior education, and ongoing training as further research on this topic would be useful when developing teacher education, credential programs, and professional development for ongoing learning.

Teachers stated they were learning instructional strategies in conferences, at professional development trainings, or by reading about them; however, they stated they may or may not be able to successfully implement the learned strategies in their classrooms. Another recommendation for further research is to send a team of teachers to a conference or professional development training to study the impact on classroom instruction. The teachers would be observed before the training and again after the training. The researcher could measure the success of the implemented strategies learned by observing changes in teacher moves, decreased unexpected student behaviors, increased expected student behaviors, and academic growth in a specific content area. This would further the body of knowledge by studying the implementation of newly learned skills.

Concluding Statement

Throughout this investigation, I provided a detailed analysis of the lived experiences of general education and special education teachers who have taught students in kindergarten or first grade with ADHD. Themes that emerged from interviews with novice and experienced teachers included students' behaviors in the classroom impeding learning, implementation of supports used in the classroom, need for additional adult support, need for administrator support, need for professional development training, lack of tools and resources, insecurity, and meaningful work. I analyzed their successes, barriers, challenges, and needs, and revealed that teachers felt they needed support to effectively implement available resources so they could be more effective in teaching kindergarten or first grade students with ADHD.

Teachers stated they needed support and training to meet the diverse needs of students in their classes. The information gained from this research is beneficial to educational stakeholders (e.g., higher education administrators and educators, primary school administrators, professional development teams, teachers, and students) when looking at the implementation of new coursework for teachers in a credential program and/or professional development training with on-going support. Teachers should be prepared, have the ability, and believe in their ability to effectively teach all students, including students with ADHD, in their classrooms. Ultimately, increasing teaching capacity and teacher self-efficacy enhances the educational experience for all students.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions:**

1. Please tell me about an experience you have had teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?
2. How easy do you find interacting with students at your school who have ADHD? (Modified from Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
    - □ Not at all easy
    - □ Slightly easy
    - □ Somewhat easy
    - □ Quite easy
    - □ Extremely easy
3. What successes have you experienced with teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD? Please describe academic and/or social examples and what makes this experience a success to you.
4. What barriers or challenges have you experienced with teaching students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?
5. Given the barriers or challenges you have experienced, what needs do you have when you teach students in kindergarten/first grade who have ADHD?
6. How effective do or did you feel teaching kindergarten or first graders who have ADHD? (modified from Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
    - □ Not at all effective
    - □ Slightly effective

- □ Somewhat effective
- □ Quite effective
- □ Extremely effective

7. How knowledgeable are you regarding where to find resources for working with students who have unique learning needs? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
   - □ Not knowledgeable at all
   - □ Slightly knowledgeable
   - □ Somewhat knowledgeable
   - □ Quite knowledgeable
   - □ Extremely knowledgeable
8. How easily can you change your teaching style to match the needs of a particular class? (Modified from Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
   - □ Not at all easily
   - □ Slightly easily
   - □ Somewhat easily
   - □ Quite easily
   - □ Extremely easily
9. To what extent can teachers improve their implementation of different teaching strategies? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
   - □ Cannot improve at all
   - □ Can improve a little
   - □ Can improve somewhat

- □ Can improve quite a bit
- □ Can improve a tremendous amount

10. How possible is it for teachers to change how well they relate to their most difficult students? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
    - □ Not at all possible to change
    - □ A little possible to change
    - □ Somewhat possible to change
    - □ Quite possible to change
    - □ Completely possible to change
11. How much does your work matter to you? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)
    - □ Does not matter at all
    - □ Matters a little bit
    - □ Matters some
    - □ Matters quite a lot
    - □ Matters a tremendous amount
12. How meaningful for you is the work that you do? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)

Demographic Questions:

What state do you teach in?

What credentials do you hold (for example Multiple Subject, Education Specialist, etc.)?

What is your highest level of education?

Are you currently a general education teacher or a special education teacher?

What grade level do you currently teach?

What grade levels have you taught?

For how many years have you taught? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)

For how many years have you taught at your current school? (Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey)

* Some of the interview questions were created based on questions developed by Panorama Education.

** For semistructured interviews, follow-up questions to the main interview questions were asked when an issue needs clarifying, or I need to dig a little deeper into an answer. Here are possible probing questions:

Can you give me an example?

Can you explain that in more detail?

How has this impacted your teaching?

How has this impacted student learning?

APPENDIX B

Recruiting Questionnaire

The purpose of this study is to better understand the successes, challenges, barriers, and needs of teachers who teach kindergarten and first-grade students who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). To ensure that you have the background to be part of this study, please answer the questions below.

Pre-Screening/Recruiting Questions

Are you a teacher in Texas or California?

Do you have at least one year of experience teaching kindergarten or first-grade students?

Do you have at least one year of experience teaching students who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Are you willing to participate in a 30–60-minute interview?