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How Does Classroom and Behavior Management Preparation Impact Performance and Confidence Among Elementary School Teachers?

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How Does Classroom and Behavior Management Preparation Impact Performance and
Confidence Among Elementary School Teachers?

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education
School of Education
Dominican University of California

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Abstract

Being an effective classroom manager is a key component to successful teaching. Research has indicated that teachers are not satisfied with their credential program preparation in the areas of classroom and behavior management. The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a correlation between the amount of management preparation teachers receive in their credential programs and their perceived confidence and preparedness in the classroom. Also, this study sought to discover if supplemental training was beneficial for beginning and experienced teachers. The review of literature presented some common themes within this area of research: the importance of classroom and behavior management, teacher dissatisfaction with their knowledge of management strategies, and how lack of these management strategies influences teacher job satisfaction. The researcher anonymously surveyed 31 general education teachers and conducted a reflective analysis of the 28 participants' responses. The analysis revealed that although many participants were not satisfied with their initial training, they do feel prepared and confident when managing their classrooms. The variables that may influence teachers' preparedness and confidence are discussed.

Introduction

Using effective behavior management techniques is extremely important for teachers to have successful classroom environments. In addition to managing individual student behaviors, if a teacher is able to effectively manage the classroom, there will be fewer behavior problems; thus, students may have a greater chance at overall academic and social success.

It is crucial for teachers to feel confident in their abilities to manage a classroom since they are the leader students turn to for support and guidance. This confidence should come from a solid understanding of classroom and behavior management strategies learned while enrolled in their credential programs. Ideally, first year teachers will possess a management skill set that allows them to begin their teaching careers with some degree of confidence in their abilities to manage and facilitate structured learning in their classrooms. Teachers who do not begin their careers with a classroom management plan must strive to learn some techniques from outside sources, such as other teachers, instructional books, or by attending classroom and behavior management workshops.

This study attempts to uncover if teachers are satisfied with the overall classroom and behavior management training they received in their credential programs. Also, it is important to find out if their confidence levels are affected by their training and management knowledge. This can help inform classroom and behavior management training in the curriculum of California's teacher credential programs.

Background and Need

Many prospective teachers first enter a teaching credential program solely focused on learning the practical skills needed to be a quality teacher, but they may not yet realize the importance of managing a classroom. During this time, they are introduced to all of the important aspects of teaching; however, they might be surprised to learn there is a certain level

of proficiency needed to ‘manage’ a classroom full of students. Not only is this an important skill for teachers to have, but many researchers believe that classroom management is the driving force behind a teacher’s ability to be successful in the classroom. “Research on effective teaching in the past decade had indicated the importance of classroom conditions that depend directly on the ability of teachers to organize and manage their classrooms” (Evertson, 1989, p. 82). No matter how much knowledge teachers have, or how organized and creative their lesson plans are, thoughtful learning cannot occur if students are not focused, attentive, and engaged in a positive learning environment. A literature review conducted by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993) illustrates the significance of proper classroom management and how it affects students. Wang et al. (1993) took the accumulated findings from their literature review and combined them with results from “134 separate meta-analyses” (Marzano & Marzano, 2003, para. 2) and concluded that “Of all the variables, classroom management had the largest effect on student achievement...students cannot learn in a chaotic, poorly managed classroom”(Marzano & Marzano, 2003, para. 2).

Research also indicates there is an underlying belief that beginning teachers do not receive enough training in behavior management techniques before entering the profession. “Recent studies suggest that many teacher education programs may not offer sufficient college coursework in behavior management...a staggering number of teacher education programs offer little or no formal training in behavior management”(Smart & Igo, 2010, p. 569).

A cursory review of a few credential program websites in California reveals that none of the programs offer a specific course within their curriculum dedicated solely to classroom or behavior management. California State University, Los Angeles offers a course titled, “Introduction to Instructional Design, Assessment and Classroom Management Methods” which does address classroom management specifically along with *two* other areas of focus

(http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/ccoe/degrees_list.htm). On the other hand, Sonoma State University's "credential program outline," does not list any courses highlighting either classroom or behavior management (<http://www.sonoma.edu/education/leee/multiple-subject/description.html>), suggesting that these topics will be taught somewhere within the curriculum of the requisite classes.

These websites support the position that classroom and behavior management seem to be embedded within credential program courses, but they are not necessarily viewed as a core subject matter that implicitly have their own domains, such as how to teach reading or how to instruct English language learners. Effectively managing a classroom is a cornerstone to successful teaching, as is individual student behavior management; therefore, it is surprising that classroom and/or behavior management are not prominently offered as separate courses in pre-service programs for general education, which would give students the introductory exposure and experience needed for such a vast and diverse area of need within the classroom.

Based on these research findings on classroom and behavior management, this study is a concentrated effort to determine if general education teachers think they received proper training in their credential programs. Hopefully, the results of this study will accurately reflect general education teachers' opinions regarding their initial management training, as well as subsequent training, and how those factors influence their preparedness and confidence levels in the classroom.

Statement of Problem

Within pre-service credentialing programs there is no specific test teachers must pass to ascertain if they are adequately prepared for the challenges of managing a classroom. Beginning teachers are not given set guidelines with regard to classroom and behavior management strategies and, during their first year of teaching, rarely have the time to acquire additional

training in these specific areas. It is important to know if teachers are satisfied with the classroom and behavior management training they received during their credential programs. If a lack of management knowledge is affecting their confidence and preparedness in the classroom it will be important to remedy this problem. Teachers must be able to successfully accommodate the variety of behavior issues presented in today's inclusive classroom environment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to discover if there is a correlation between the amount of classroom and behavior management preparation teachers receive in their credential programs and their perceived confidence and preparedness in the classroom. Also, this study aims to determine if additional management training is beneficial for beginning and experienced teachers.

Research Questions

- 1) What do teachers report about their preparation for classroom and behavior management in their pre-service credential programs as well as in-service professional development activities?
- 2) What is the connection between classroom and behavior management preparation and perceived preparedness?
- 3) What is the connection between classroom and behavior management preparation and confidence?

Theoretical Rationale

The use of successful classroom and behavior management strategies is vital so elementary teachers are able to maintain control of their classrooms. This study assumes that without effective methods of both classroom management and behavior management, teachers would not be able to successfully achieve the goals of the curriculum and maintain a positive learning environment.

Within this study the interplay between ‘classroom management’ and ‘behavior management’ is acknowledged since both of these management styles may be implemented within the classroom. To define these management styles individually, “...classroom management reflects the class as a group, behavior management refers to the individual student” (Schmidt, n.d, para. 1). Building on the understanding that classroom and behavior management can be used together, this study embraces Jacob Kounin’s idea of the “Ripple Effect,” with the understanding that one student’s behavior can influence, either positively or negatively, the conduct of the other students in the classroom; thus a teacher must be proficient in both managing the whole class, as well as individual students (Kounin, 1970).

This study also assumes that the goal of every teacher is to have a classroom in which students feel safe, supported, and academically challenged; and without proper classroom and behavior management students will be disorganized, off-task, and unable to meet the grade level standards. “Well managed classrooms provide an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish....research tells us that the teacher is probably the single most important factor affecting student achievement...”(Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003, p. 1).

The design and implementation of the survey used in this study was a diligent process in an effort to generate honest responses from the participants.

Review of the Literature

This review of literature discusses the importance of classroom and behavior management, and examines how significant management training relates to the classroom teacher's success and overall job satisfaction. Within this overview, both 'behavior management' and 'classroom management' are recognized as being critical components of a successful classroom, and are defined as: "...the process of shaping student behavior in order to facilitate a classroom environment in which effective learning can occur" (Walker & Shea, 1998) as cited in (Smart & Igo, 2010, p. 568).

Review of Previous Research

Overview of behavior and classroom management. Behaviorist B.F. Skinner developed the idea of "operant conditioning" (Boeree, 2006, para. 9) and the use of operant conditioning can be seen in classrooms today. Operant conditioning is defined as "the behavior is followed by a consequence, and the nature of the consequence modifies the organism's tendency to repeat the behavior in the future" (Boeree, 2006, para. 9). Teachers who use behavior management techniques are responding to, or often trying to prevent, certain individual student behaviors in the classroom.

As Marzano, Gaddy, Foseid, Foseid, and Marzano (2005) describe, the consequence for misbehavior can be negative or positive "disciplinary interventions should involve a balance of both positive and negative consequences....an appropriate disciplinary program involves strategies for both reinforcing positive behavior and dealing with inappropriate and disruptive behavior"(Marzano, Gaddy, Foseid, Foseid, & Marzano, 2005, p. 37).

Focusing beyond individual student behaviors, Jacob Kounin made a name for himself in the 1970's with his findings on how teachers can be effective classroom managers. He sought to find out what teachers could do to encourage positive behavior from their students. Kounin

(1970) defined classroom management as “dealing with the surface behavior of children as measured by overt signs of work involvement and by deviancy” (Kounin, 1970, p. 143). He named five strategies that teachers use in the classroom that decrease or prevent student misbehavior. In a 1992 journal article, Evertson and Harris succinctly listed these strategies:

- *Withitness* – communicating awareness of student behavior;
- *Overlapping* – doing more than one thing at once;
- *Smoothness and momentum* – moving in and out of activities smoothly with appropriately paced and sequenced instruction; and
- *Group alerting* – keeping all students attentive in a whole-group focus (Evertson & Harris, 1992, p. 75)

As mentioned previously, Kounin (1970) is also known for his discovery of the “Ripple Effect” which is specifically defined as “how a teacher’s method of handling the misbehavior of one child influences *other* children who are audiences to the event but not themselves targets” (Kounin, 1970, p. 2).

A proactive approach to prevent discipline problems is a key element within Kounin’s research (Evertson & Harris, 1992). As Kounin (1970) writes himself, “One might say that a mastery of group management techniques enables teachers to be free from concern about management” (Kounin, 1970, p. 145).

Importance of classroom management. A meta-analysis conducted by three researchers sought to determine what factors influence student achievement. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993/1994) analyzed fifty years of research ranging from written works to survey responses, in order to create “...a knowledge base comprising 11,000 statistical findings...” which they analyzed to create “28 categories of influence on school learning” (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993/1994, p. 74). From this research, they discovered that the number one factor affecting

student learning was classroom management. According to the results of their inquiry, effective classroom management is directly responsible for substantial student learning. Teachers with strong management skills are able to maintain control and keep students engaged during instructional time, instead of constantly focusing on off-task behaviors (Wang et al., 1993/1994, p. 76).

In the text book, “The First Days of School – How to be an Effective Teacher”, Wong and Wong (2009) support the viewpoint that classroom management is the most important aspect of teaching. To illustrate its importance and significance to the art of teaching, they devote ten chapters, out of a twenty-five chapter book, to classroom management. The ten chapters take readers through specific steps teachers must follow in order to be successful and productive managers. Within the text, the authors emphasize that being able to manage a classroom must come *before* teachers attempt to instruct students (Wong & Wong, 2009, p. 82). Wong and Wong (2009) focus on teachers “managing” not “disciplining” students in order to create a positive educational environment; and highlight that teachers properly manage their students by presenting themselves as organized and consistent, not scattered and ‘off the cuff’ in relation to rules, procedures and consequences (Wong & Wong, 2009, p. 82-83).

Evertson and Harris (1992) reviewed a wide range of research and field studies done on the topic of classroom management. Understanding that classroom management is the highest concern for teachers, they wanted to reassess the past research done on classroom management in order to relate it to real life situations teachers’ currently experience. From their accumulated research results, they created a list of attributes that define effective classroom managers so that, if needed, teachers would be able to reevaluate their management techniques. The list is as follows:

- Use time as effectively as possible;

- Implement group strategies with high levels of involvement and low levels of misbehavior;
- Choose lesson formats and academic tasks conducive to high student engagement;
- Communicate clearly rules of participation;
- Prevent problems by implementing a system at the beginning of the school year (Evertson & Harris, 1992, p. 76).

In reviewing studies and texts focusing on classroom management, it is obvious that this topic is extremely wide-ranging and very complex. Teachers have many strategies to choose from depending on whether they are working to prevent off-task behaviors or trying to correct students who are not demonstrating appropriate conduct in the classroom.

Classroom and behavior management training. Effective classroom and behavior management have been proven to be some of the most influential factors in student achievement, yet studies have revealed that teachers do not think they are receiving proper training in such important areas.

A study conducted by Merrett and Wheldall (1993) partially focused on teachers' views regarding their classroom management training offered within their credential programs, as well as their thoughts about professional development. They interviewed 176 secondary school teachers and found that, although they viewed classroom management knowledge to be extremely valuable in their profession, “[n]early three-quarters of them were dissatisfied with the preparation in this area of professional skills provided by their initial training courses” (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993, para. 1). These teachers also reported that participating in additional training would be beneficial for them as well as the younger teachers who are just starting their careers (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993, para. 1).

An article by Carson (2010), discusses the need for a more comprehensive instructional method of classroom management in Connecticut's teacher training programs. She takes a closer look into multiple studies and papers on classroom management training and cites numerous sources with regard to the lack of classroom management training on the national level. Carson (2010) points out that classroom management within the curriculum of credential programs is "often regulated to secondary status, behind content pedagogy and educational psychology" (as cited in Wesley, 1992). She also explains issues that arise from classroom management not having its own platform within credential programs "...when classroom management is integrated into other courses, it may be overshadowed by the primary course content and may be taught by an instructor whose area of expertise is not classroom management" (as cited in Landau 2001).

Although much of the research states that credential programs are not providing adequate training, an alternate viewpoint is that credential candidates are not properly applying the skills they learned during their schooling. A study, done by Garrahy, Cothran, and Kulinna (2005), focused on physical education teachers' pedagogical knowledge and how they apply that to classroom management. After analyzing data gathered by interviewing twenty teachers, they discussed another possible explanation for teachers' difficulty with classroom management:

"It is not clear whether the teachers' undergraduate programs did not address management techniques or whether the teachers were unable to interpret such information prior to their professional immersion....It is also possible that teachers learned valuable information in their teacher education programs but had since forgotten the source of that knowledge over time" (Garrahy et al., 2005, p. 60 & 61).

Evertson (1989) replicated a study conducted in Arkansas with secondary school teachers. Instead, she focused on elementary school teachers and sought to discover if classroom

management training at the beginning of the year (i.e., workshops) would benefit experienced teachers (Evertson, 1989, p. 82). Evertson (1989) firmly believes in the importance of classroom management as a key factor to successful teaching, and reports that “the problem of translating these principles into practice remains” (Evertson, 1989, p. 82). The twenty-nine participants in the study were from two separate school districts in Arkansas – fourteen in the treatment group and fifteen in the control group. The treatment group received classroom management training for one day, prior to the start of the school year, and then had a refresher workshop in October. The control group did not receive any training before the start of school, and were slated to attend training in spring or summer. In both groups, the participants’ ability to manage effectively was observed anonymously using a variety of measures (Evertson, 1989, p. 82-84). The results determined that the treatment group had more success with conducting lessons and keeping off-task behavior to a minimum; and the treatment group was viewed as having an “edge” since the workshop strategies allowed them to have an advantage, compared to the control groups’ preparation, as they established classroom procedures with their incoming students (Evertson, 1989, p. 88-89).

Another study supporting the idea that additional training is beneficial for teachers was conducted by Baker (2005). She surveyed teachers on their confidence levels with regard to specific classroom and behavior management strategies, and found that their “perceived self-efficacy for classroom management” influenced their preparedness for handling difficult students (Baker, 2005, p. 58). Teachers with low self-efficacy reported less aptitude for accommodating the demands of challenging students. Therefore, it is vital for teachers to receive some additional training so their self-perceptions regarding their capabilities for managing students become more favorable. To substantiate the importance of teachers feeling prepared and confident in the classroom, Baker (2005) writes:

“...this research supports the concept that when teachers feel confident in their overall effectiveness for structuring and maintain a positive classroom environment, they also feel more ready, able, and willing to support challenging students with specialized behavior management techniques” (Baker, 2005, p. 59).

From her findings, Baker (2005) recommended that teacher confidence would be positively impacted if professional development was more diverse in order to meet the varied management needs of teachers. Also, teachers collaborating with their peers to problem solve and gain insight on additional management techniques was suggested.

Potential problems associated with lack of training. It is significant that the lack of training is causing teachers to feel stressed and dissatisfied with their jobs, “[a]gain and again, teachers have been reported to judge student misbehavior and classroom discipline to be among the most difficult and disturbing aspect of the teaching experience as well as a major factor contributing to teacher discontent and burnout” (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993, para. 3).

Multiple studies have found that teacher “burnout” is one of the main consequences of poor classroom management efficacy (Ozdemir, 2007). A study done by Ozdemir (2007) attempted to discover what influences teacher burnout. Seven hundred teachers were asked to fill out “measures” which included a “demographic data form,” “Maslach Burnout Inventory” scale, and a “Teacher Efficacy in Classroom Management and Discipline Inventory” (Ozdemir, 2007, p. 259). From the findings of this study, Ozdemir (2007) concluded that how teachers’ view their effectiveness with classroom management may be linked to potential burnout. Therefore, an emphasis on sufficient training during their credential programs and continued professional development should be beneficial in decreasing teachers’ stress and exhaustion.

A study focusing on teachers' perceptions about their jobs also supports the notion of a lack of behavior management knowledge being a major deterrent for teachers. Liu and Meyer (2005) analyzed survey data from the National Center for Education Statistics, and found that:

“Student discipline problems are a major reason for teachers' dissatisfaction, second only to low compensation....Teachers are largely prepared to teach those students who are ready to learn by textbook standards, but they are not well trained to anticipate the needs of many students in real classrooms who may be intellectually and psychologically behind this norm. In short, the current curriculum may prepare student teachers adequately for academic teaching, but not well enough for managing real students in the classroom” (Liu & Meyer, 2005, p. 998, 999).

In further studies, it is shown that teachers nationwide leave this profession due to behavior management problems. Ingersoll (2001) found that “over 30% of teachers leaving the profession cited behavior management issues as their primary reason for leaving the classroom” (as cited in Smart & Igo, 2010, p. 569)

Whatever the case may be, teachers need to feel confident in their ability to manage a classroom as well as possess the skills needed to keep individual students focused and on task. “When practiced effectively, classroom management is a proactive strategy that creates a classroom environment in which desirable behavior is expected, supported, and reinforced” (Reeve, n.d., para. 10).

Summary of Major Themes

Throughout the research on classroom and behavior management, the common themes emerging were: the importance of classroom and behavior management, teacher dissatisfaction with their knowledge of management strategies, and how lack of these management strategies influences teacher job satisfaction. The researchers studying the value of classroom and/or

behavior management efficacy unanimously agree that it is influential to the classroom teacher's success, and is an essential factor effecting their job satisfaction and confidence in the workplace. There is also a great deal of research focusing on the weaknesses of teacher training programs. Many believe that classroom and behavior management preparation should be in the forefront of the credential program's curriculum, yet they are currently getting lost within the other, more valued subject matter. However, an alternate viewpoint is that teachers are not properly applying what they have learned from their credential program courses into their daily classroom environment; and that supplemental management training is beneficial for these teachers who need some extra support.

How Present Study Will Extend Literature

It is extremely important for teachers to have concrete knowledge and confidence in their abilities to accommodate the variety of behavioral needs they encounter in today's diverse classrooms. The results of this study will help shed light on the perceived classroom and behavior management needs of teachers, and will uncover how they view their preparedness and confidence for coping with the behavioral issues in their classrooms.

This study will also contribute to the literature with regard to the current opinion on credential program training and teachers' reported satisfaction with their classroom and behavior management knowledge when graduating from their training programs, by directly surveying employed teachers. The survey anonymously asks teachers for their feedback in an attempt to obtain the most honest responses. The results of this inquiry will support continued focus on the topic of classroom and behavior management training within credential programs, as well as the value of continued professional development.

Methodology

This study focused on the relationship between classroom and behavior management training and teacher preparedness and confidence in an elementary school setting. The researcher created a survey designed to gather information on these topics in order to ascertain if teachers' confidence levels and preparedness were affected by the amount of management training they received.

Sample and Site

The researcher chose nonprobability sampling; specifically purposive sampling because there was limited access to participants, yet there was a specific criterion the participants needed to meet in order for them to be part of the study.

Purposive sampling, which is used when a researcher needs participants who possess specific characteristics, was implemented in this project since the participants needed to be general education teachers working in an elementary school setting. It was important to use only general education teachers since teachers working in elementary school settings in California must all meet the same requirements. One requirement, as listed on the state of California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing website, is that applicants for multiple subject teaching credentials must "complete a multiple subject teacher preparation program..." ("Multiple Subject," 2012, p. 1) Therefore, since these teachers all attended a credential program, they were qualified study participants. When answering the survey questions each participant would be able to accurately reflect on their teacher training experiences.

The participants surveyed were all of the general education teachers working at one school site. These teachers instructed kindergarten, first, second or third grade. The elementary school used for this study was chosen because the researcher was a student teacher within the school district and the teachers working at the school met the criterion needed to participate in

the study. The mentor teacher of the researcher was able to facilitate communication between the researcher and the other teachers who volunteered to take part in the study.

The school district is located in a large county in Northern California and consists of a primary school and middle school together serving approximately 950 students ("██████," 2012). Both schools have been designated a "California Distinguished School" and pride themselves on helping their students achieve to their greatest potential ("██████," 2012). The elementary school where the participants work serves 575 students in kindergarten to third grade ("██████," 2012). There are seven classes per grade level plus one Special Education classroom. There are currently 31 general education teachers on this campus and all of them were asked to participate in the study. Most of these teachers work full time in their classrooms, but there are a few teachers who job share allowing them to work part time. It is reported that, at this elementary school, the average years of experience teachers have is 14 years, and the average years teachers have been working in the school district is 10.4 ("Educational Demographics," 2012).

Professional development is a very important part of the district's goals and each teacher at this school site participates in professional development programs throughout the year ("School Accountability," 2012, p. 17). As stated in the School Accountability Report published by the district, teachers attend three days of staff development per year and are given the opportunity to attend workshops and classes offered by the County Office of Education, local colleges and/or universities. The School Accountability Report also lists the topics the professional development training focused on for the school years 2005 through 2011. The 2005-2006 training featured "...effective classroom management and improvement of school culture via the BEST (Building Effective Schools Together) program, assisting students with difficult behaviors or learning difficulties..." ("School Accountability," 2012, p. 17).

Access and Permissions

The researcher gained permission from the principal of the elementary school in order to work with the mentor teacher and contact all of the general education teachers employed at the school site. The mentor teacher was the liaison between the researcher and the participants and forwarded the survey and supporting documentation out to all of the teachers at the school site who met the criteria indicated by the researcher. Each participant was given a letter of introduction written by the researcher and the survey link via email. All items were approved by the university's institutional research review board.

Data Gathering Strategies

To gather the data used for this study the researcher created a survey designed to obtain information about how teachers' viewed their preparedness for classroom and behavior management when exiting their credential programs and entering into the field of teaching, as well as in subsequent years. The survey also assessed teachers' overall confidence with classroom management knowledge.

The researcher created the survey on the website SurveyMonkey. The survey, available in Appendix A, was emailed to all of the participants on Wednesday, September 5, 2012. It consisted of five questions. Three questions were multiple choice and two questions used a 5-point scale rating. The researcher respectfully followed up with a reminder email, sent by the mentor teacher, to participants on Tuesday, September 11, 2012. The researcher gave participants until Friday, September 14, 2012 to complete the surveys before gathering the submitted data from SurveyMonkey to analyze. The researcher collected a total of 28 completed surveys out of a possible 31 eligible participants employed at the school site.

Using this type of survey allowed the researcher to provide participants with complete anonymity since personal information (i.e., name, address) was not asked for on the survey.

Also, the researcher emailed all correspondence to the mentor teacher who then forwarded it on to the participants, thus the researcher never had access to participants' email addresses. Within the introductory letter initially sent to the potential participants it was made clear that answering the survey questions was completely voluntary and the purpose of the study was to help the researcher complete her master's thesis. The researcher also provided an email address so the volunteers could contact her directly with questions if needed. The researcher never received any questions from participants during the study.

Data Analysis Approach

After the surveys were completed, the researcher analyzed the data to discover if the participants felt their credential programs adequately prepared them for the challenge of classroom and behavior management, and sought to find out if the participants felt confident in their abilities to successfully manage a classroom. The researcher wanted to see if there was a correlation between teacher confidence level and the amount of management training they reported. The 28 collected surveys were examined and the participants' responses were tallied to see if the percentages showed a relationship between the two variables of confidence and perceived preparedness in the areas of classroom and behavior management.

Ethical Standards

This study adheres to the Ethical Standards in Human Subjects Research of the American Psychological Association (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2009). Additionally, the project was reviewed and approved by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board.

Findings

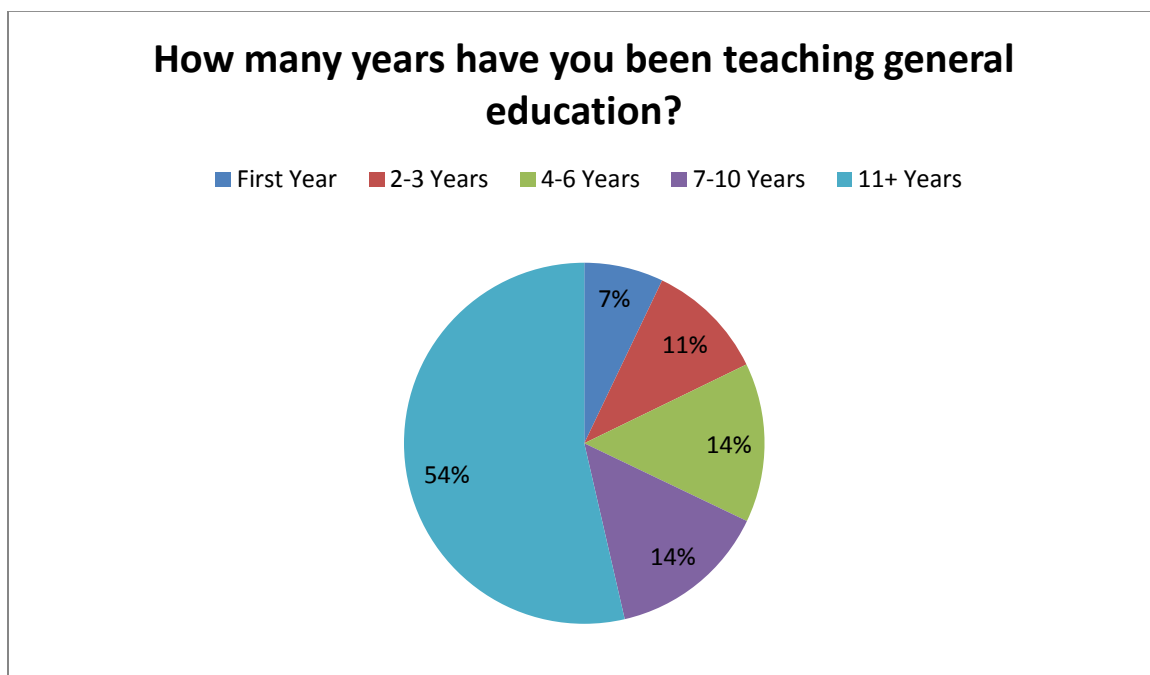
After gathering the survey responses, the researcher analyzed the data and generated some general conclusions regarding the participants’ satisfaction with their classroom and behavior management training, their reported levels of preparedness and confidence; and how these variables may influence each other. This reflective analysis of the data was then used to answer the three research questions of the study.

Description of Site, Individuals, Data

The survey link was distributed via email to 31 general education teachers at one school site. Twenty-eight teachers anonymously completed the survey and the results were gathered from the Survey Monkey website.

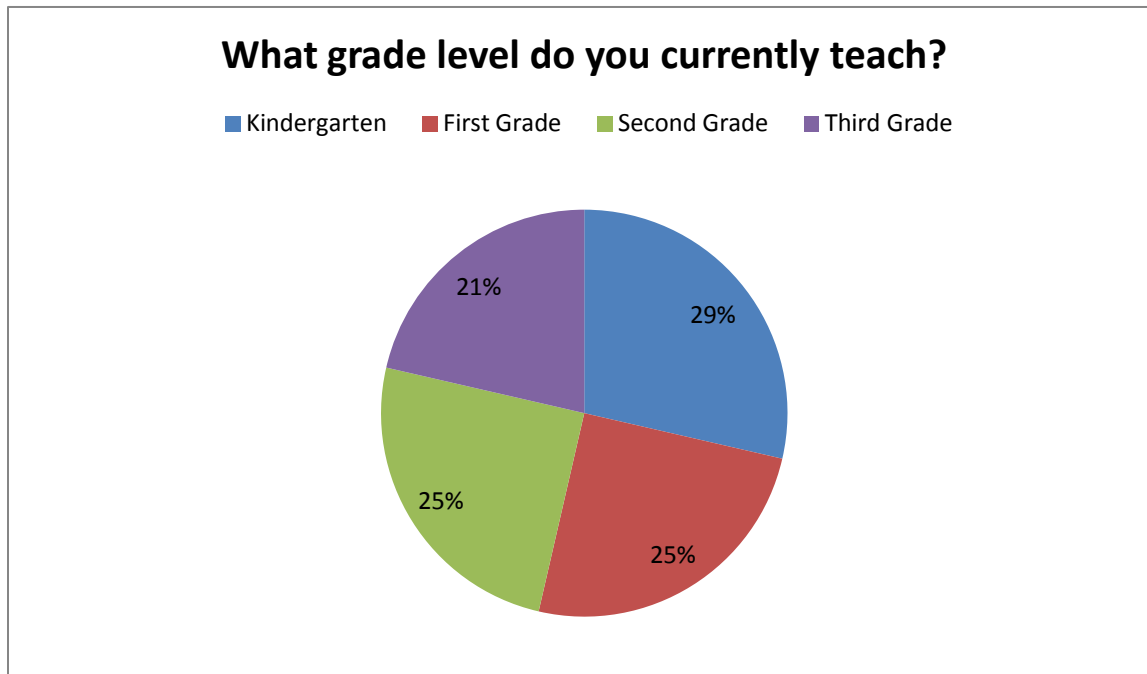
The survey (see Appendix A) consisted of five questions. The first two questions asked participants general information about themselves. The first question asks, “How many years have you been teaching general education?”. Over half of the participants reported to have 11 or more years of teaching experience. The response results are as follows:

Table 1



The second survey question asks the participants what grade level they teach. Of the twenty-eight participants, 8 were kindergarten teachers, 7 first grade teachers, 7 second grade teachers, and 6 reportedly teach third grade. The summary of their responses by percentage is shown in Table 2 below:

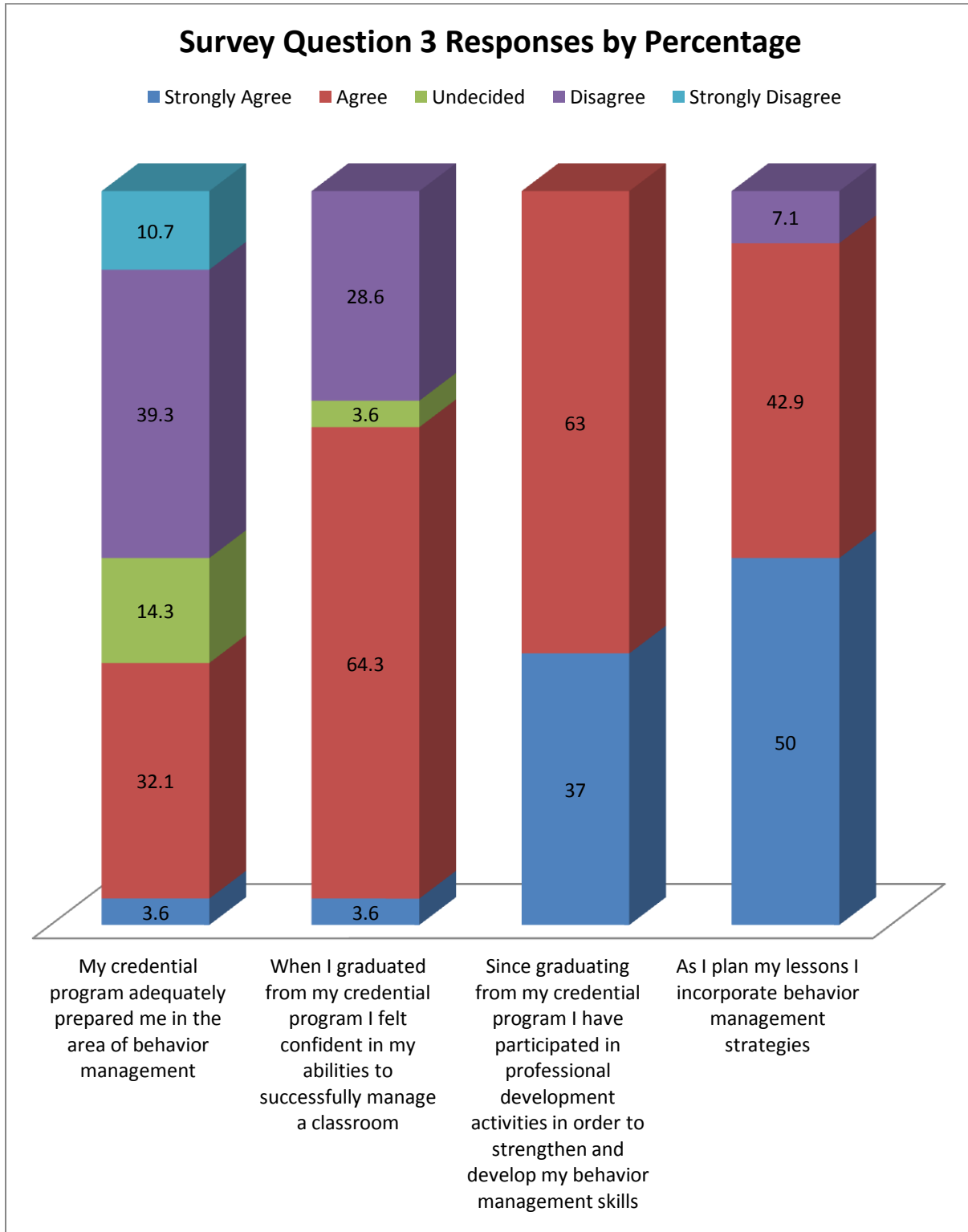
Table 2



The third survey question uses a 5-point scale rating. Participants were asked if they “strongly agree”, “agree”, are “undecided”, “disagree”, or “strongly disagree” to four separate statements focusing on topics such as behavior management and their credential program experience. The first statement within question three is: “My credential program adequately prepared me in the area of behavior management.” The highest response was “disagree” with 39.3%. However, the second highest response chosen was “agree” with a slightly lower percentage of 32.1%. The second statement is: “When I graduated from my credential program I felt confident in my abilities to successfully manage a classroom.” The most frequently chosen response for this statement was “agree” with the majority of participants (64.3%) selecting this rating; and the second highest response was “disagree” with 28.6%. The third statement, “Since

graduating from my credential program I have participated in professional development activities in order to strengthen and develop my behavior management skills. (i.e.,workshops, classroom observations, coursework)” only had two responses selected - 63.0% of the participants selected “agree”, while 37.0% chose “strongly agree”. The final statement within question three is “As I plan my lessons I incorporate behavior management strategies.” The top two responses for this statement were “strongly agree” with 50.0% and “agree” with 42.9%, and only 7.1% chose “disagree”. The stacked column chart below in table 3 shows the responses to each of the four statements broken down into percentages.

Table 3



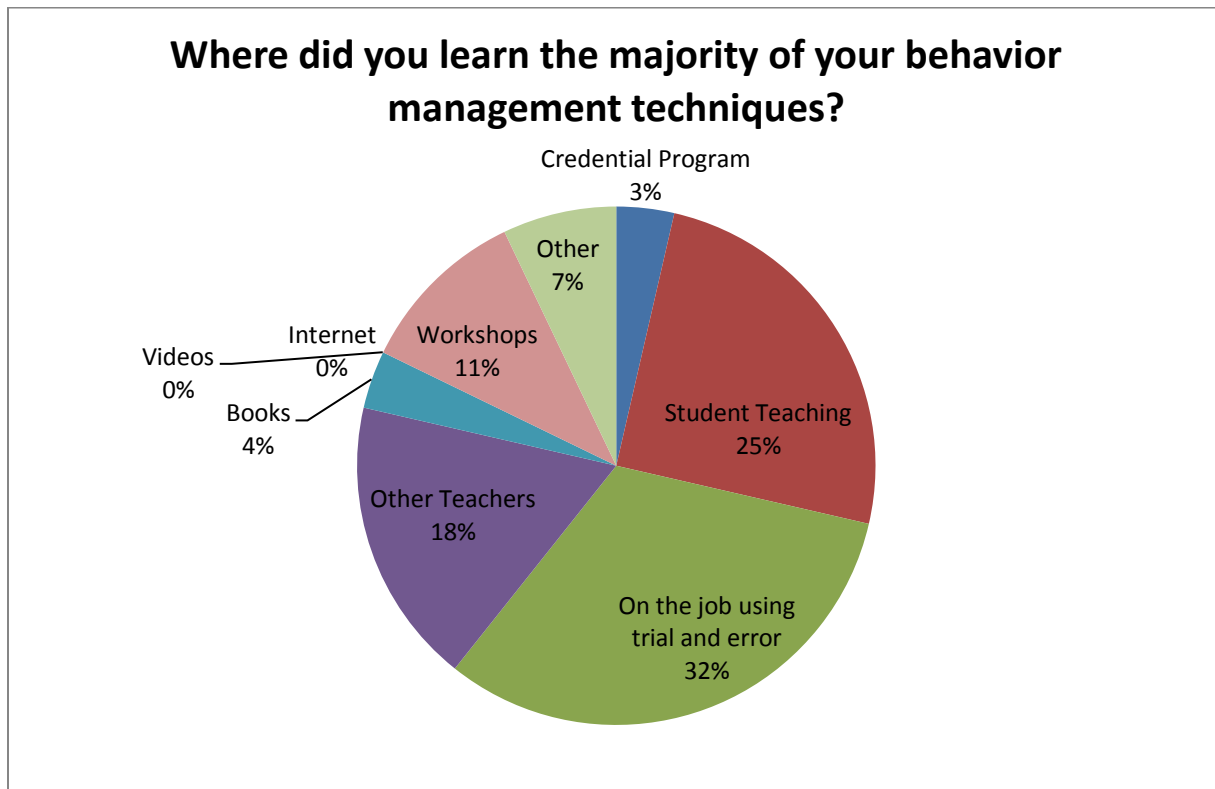
The fourth question on the survey is a multiple choice question asking participants “Where did you learn the majority of your behavior management techniques?” The teachers were able to choose from nine options. The options, with response percentage, were: credential program (3.6%), student teaching (25.0%), on the job using trial and error (32.1%), other teachers (17.9%), books (3.6%), videos (0.0%), internet (0.0%), workshops (10.7%), or other (7.1%). If they chose “other” participants were asked to specify by typing in an answer. Two participants chose “other” and their answers were:

Participant 1: “Substitute teaching”

Participant 2: “I have used many different resources and combine them.”

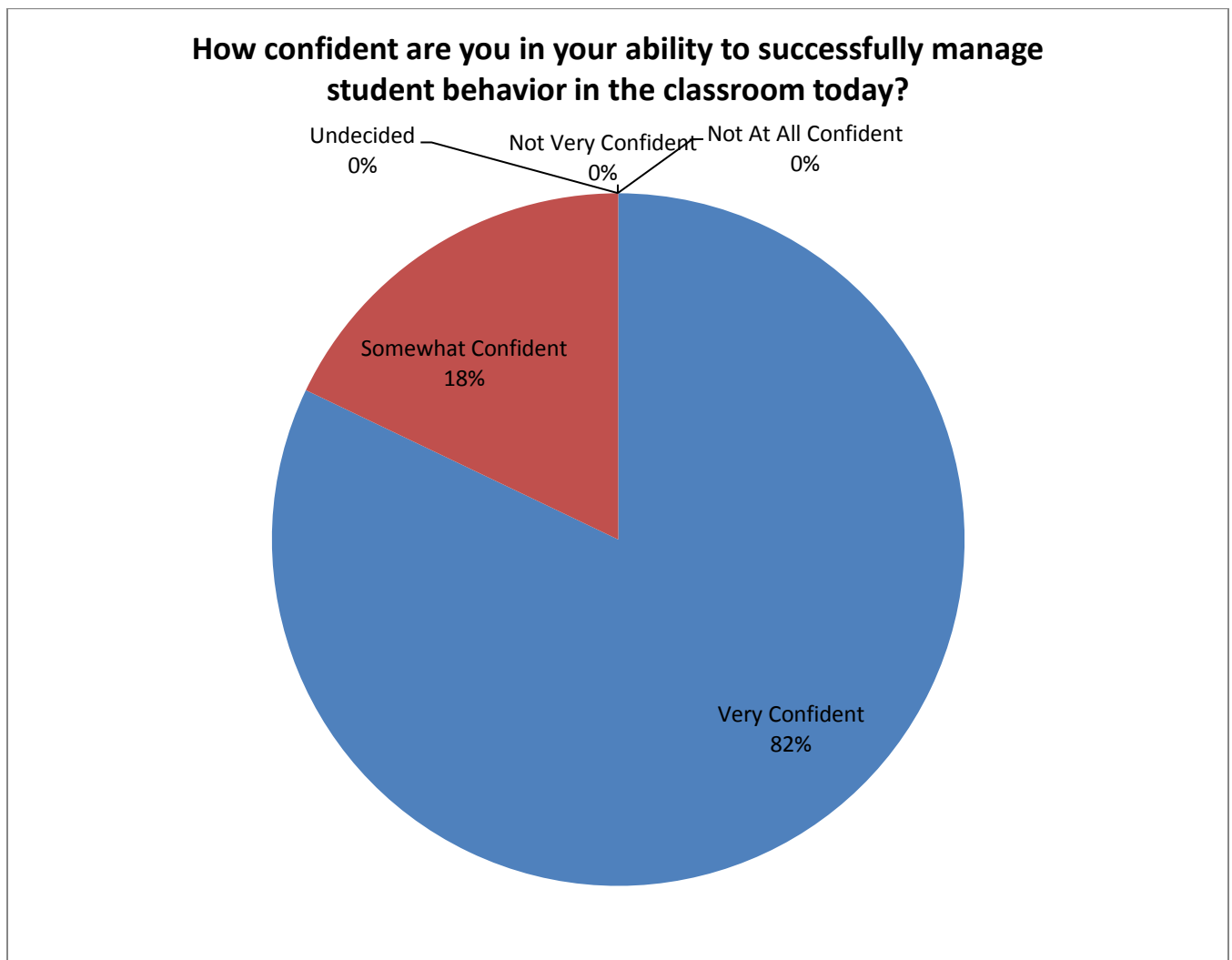
In table 4 below is a breakdown of responses by percentage:

Table 4



The fifth, and final survey question asks participants “How confident are you in your ability to successfully manage student behavior in the classroom today?” The participants were asked to choose one of five ratings, ranging from “very confident”, “somewhat confident”, “undecided”, “not very confident”, or “not at all confident”. The majority of the participants answered “very confident” with an 82.1% response. The rest of the participants (17.9%) answered “somewhat confident”. Table 5 illustrates the participants’ responses by percentage.

Table 5

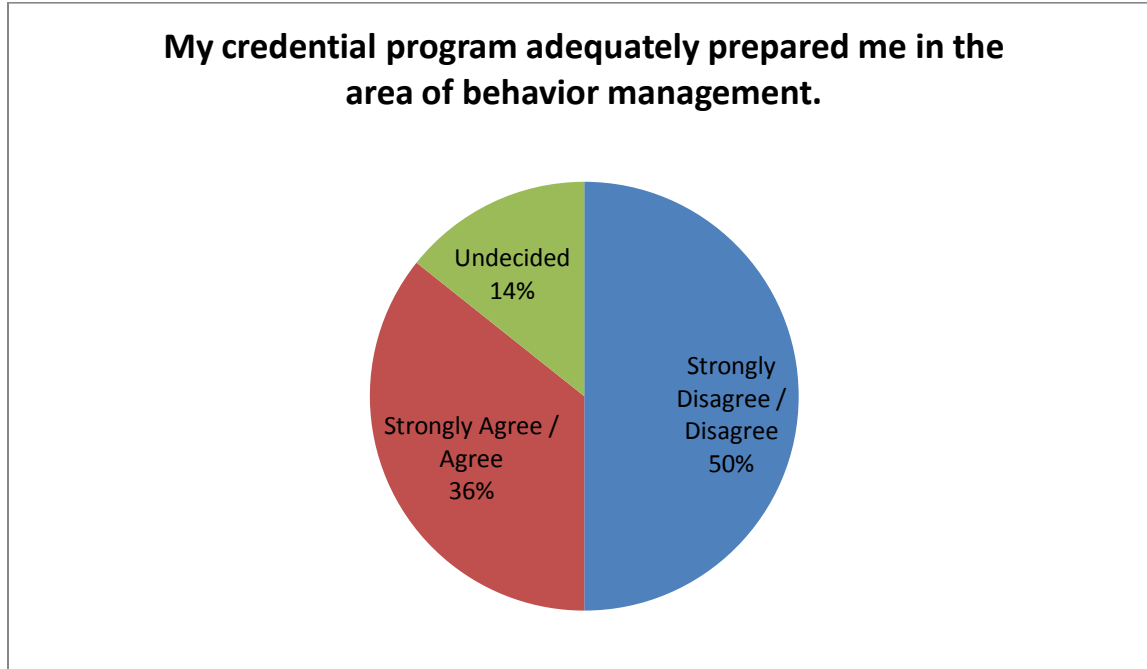


Analysis of Themes

This study posed three research questions focusing on teachers' preparation for managing a classroom, as well as their perceived preparedness and confidence in the classroom regarding their knowledge and abilities of classroom and behavior management.

The first research question has two components. First, it asks what teachers report about their preparation for classroom and behavior management in their credential programs. The first statement within survey question three asks participants about their credential program experience. This statement, "My credential program adequately prepared me in the area of behavior management", provided an interesting result since fourteen of the twenty eight participants chose "disagree" (39.3%) or "strongly disagree" (10.7%), while ten of them chose "agree" (32.1%) or "strongly agree" (3.6%). In terms of participants' agreeing or disagreeing with the statement, at first glance, this data did not present a strong argument for one rating or the other since the results were so close in percentage; 39.3% of the participants chose "disagree" and 32.1% chose "agree". However, if the percentages are combined, "disagree" and "strongly disagree" make up 50% of the participants' responses, while "agree" and "strongly agree" represent 35.7%. The remaining participants chose "undecided" 14.3%. By analyzing the percentages, and calculating them this way, it can be assumed that a solid half of the study's participants were dissatisfied with their credential program's behavior management preparation. This analysis is illustrated in table 6 below.

Table 6



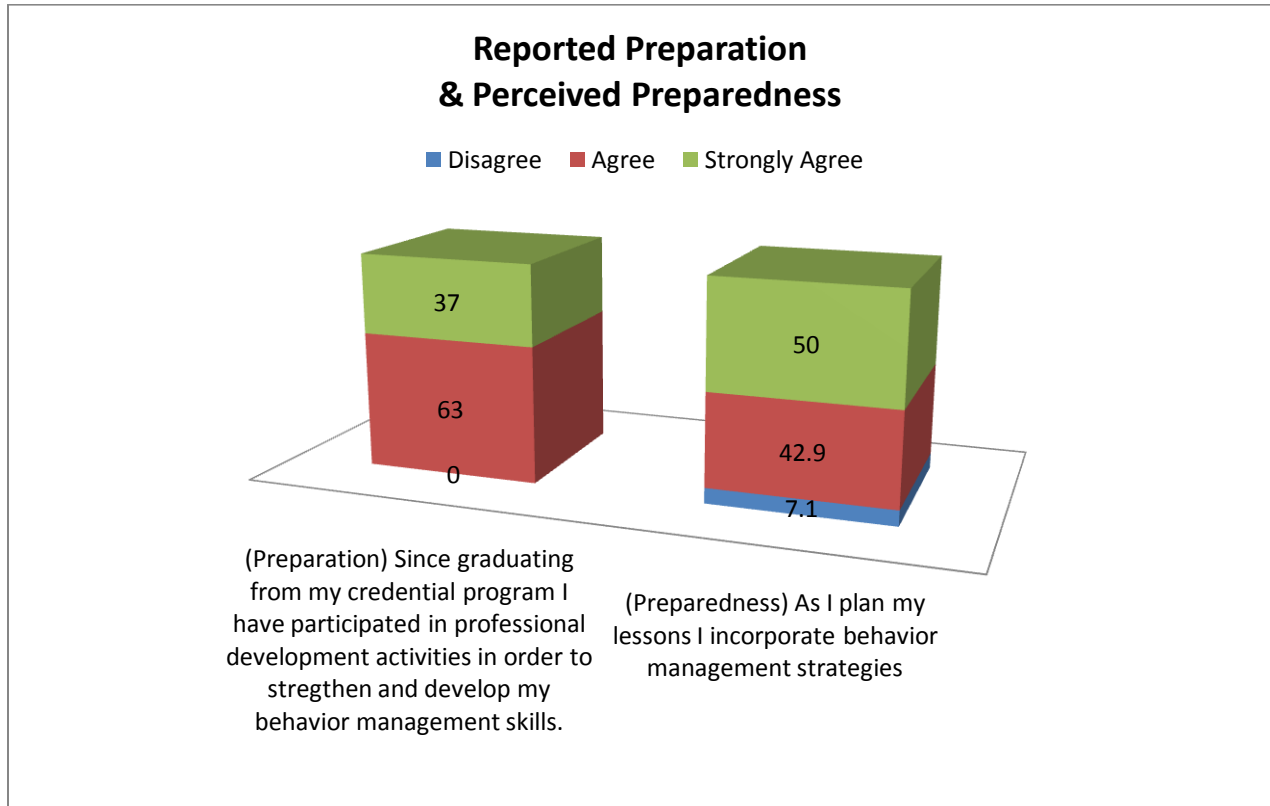
The second component of the first research question focused on teachers' preparation for classroom and behavior management within in-service professional development activities. 'Professional development activities' in this study were defined as additional classroom and behavior management training that participants attended after graduating from their credential programs. This component was measured in the third statement within survey question three: "Since graduating from my credential program I have participated in professional development activities in order to strengthen and develop my behavior management skills. (i.e., workshops, classroom observations, coursework)." This response rate provided strong data since all the participants were in agreement with the statement: 37.0% chose "strongly agree," while 63.0% chose "agree".

Overall, this study's data supports the viewpoint that a significant amount of teaching credential candidates are not satisfied with their training program's behavior management preparation. It can also be concluded that all the participants furthered their knowledge and may have improved their skill set by seeking additional education on this topic.

The second research question sought to determine if there was a connection between teachers' reported preparation and perceived preparedness of classroom and behavior management strategies. As discussed previously, the teachers' preparation was measured in survey question three within the first and third statements (see Appendix A). To answer this research question, the third statement's response rate is what was analyzed and compared to the perceived preparedness reported by the participants. Again, the third statement within survey question three is: "Since graduating from my credential program I have participated in professional development activities in order to strengthen and develop my behavior management skills. (i.e., workshops, classroom observations, coursework)."

Before surveying the participants, the preconceived connection between preparation and preparedness was thought to be that if the participants reported they did feel prepared for classroom and behavior management then they would also report a high level of preparedness since they had acquired sufficient management training. In analyzing the response percentages, it does appear that these participants felt prepared for managing their classrooms. Preparedness was measured in statement four within survey question three: "As I plan my lessons I incorporate behavior management strategies". Almost all of the participants agreed with this statement – 50% chose "strongly agree", 42.9% chose "agree", while 7.1% chose "disagree". In table 7 below the stacked column chart illustrates the results for preparation and preparedness as reported by the participants.

Table 7



The positive response for this measure of preparation might also be attributed to the level of experience this particular group of participants reported. As illustrated in table 1, over half of participants (53.6%) reported they have been teaching for more than 11 years. This amount of time teaching affords them opportunities to participate in additional classroom and behavior management activities; therefore, they feel more prepared to deal with student behavior in the classroom. This level of experience may also be a factor in their reported confidence ratings as discussed below.

The third research question sought to determine if there was a connection between teachers’ reported preparation and their perceived confidence with classroom and behavior management. Within the survey, confidence was measured in the second statement within question three: “When I graduated from my credential program I felt confident in my abilities to successfully manage a classroom,” as well as question five: “How confident are you in your

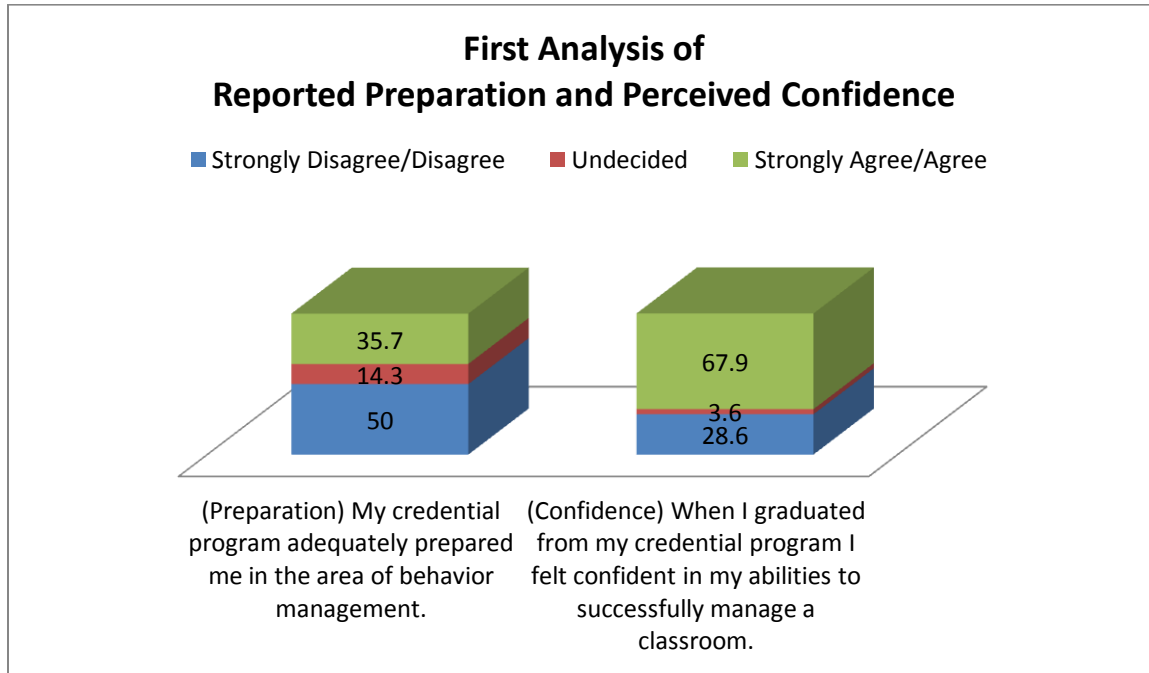
ability to successfully manage student behavior in the classroom today?” As reported earlier, preparation was measured within the first and third statements of survey question three (see Appendix A). Before conducting the survey, the researcher assumed overall, if teachers reported satisfaction with their preparation they would also report a high level of confidence in their abilities to manage a classroom.

The researcher analyzed the four measures of preparation and confidence on the survey in two separate parts. The first analysis is of the first and second statements within survey question three. The first statement is: “My credential program adequately prepared me in the area of behavior management;” and the second statement is: “When I graduated from my credential program I felt confident in my abilities to successfully manage a classroom.”

The reported ratings of these two statements provided an interesting result since 50% of the participants disagreed with the statement that their credential programs adequately prepared them in the area of behavior management, yet 67.9% agreed that they felt confident in their abilities to manage a classroom when graduating from their credential program. This data generates the need for further research since it is unknown as to what influenced the participants’ confidence if they didn’t believe their credential program adequately prepared them for managing a classroom. One influential factor to be considered may be student teaching. In analyzing the responses to survey question four: “Where did you learn the majority of your behavior management techniques?”, 25% of the participants reported “student teaching” which may have influenced their confidence levels before graduating from their credential programs.

In table 8 below, the stacked column chart shows the percentages for the first analysis.

Table 8



For the second part of the analysis, the response data for the third statement within survey question three and survey question five was studied. The third statement within survey question three is: “Since graduating from my credential program I have participated in professional development activities in order to strengthen and develop my behavior management skills. (i.e., workshops, classroom observations, coursework);” and survey question five is: “How confident are you in your ability to successfully manage student behavior in the classroom today?”

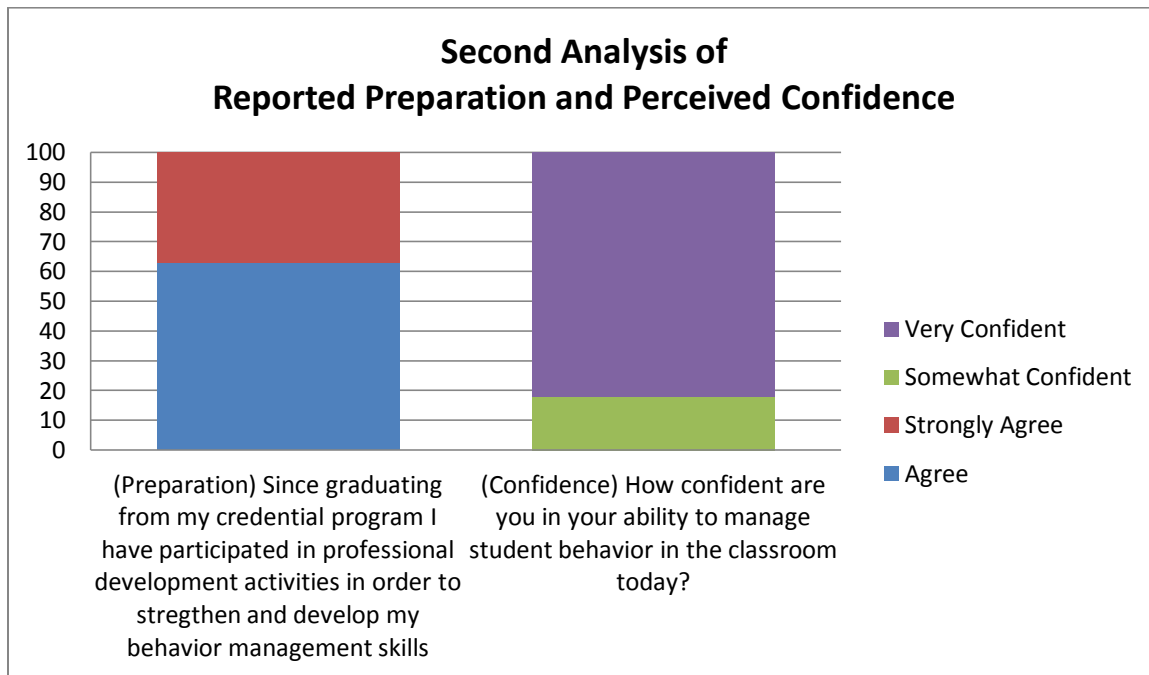
The response percentages for these survey questions were compared to one another since both referenced teachers’ preparation and confidence since graduating from their credential programs up until the present day. After analyzing the response percentages for both variables, it does appear that preparation and confidence are positively related. In response to the measure of preparation, 100% of the participants agreed that they have participated in additional professional development activities since graduating from their credential programs – 37.0% strongly agree, 63.0% agree. When asked about their confidence in relation to their ability to successfully manage student behavior in the classroom, 82.1% of the participants reported to be

“very confident”, and the remaining 17.9% are “somewhat confident” in their abilities.

According to this data, teachers who have supplemented their classroom and behavior management knowledge with additional activities may be more confident than those who have not furthered their skill set.

In table 9 below, the response percentages are illustrated:

Table 9



As mentioned earlier, this high rating of confidence may be linked to experience, since 15 of the 28 participants (53.6%) reportedly have been teaching general education for over 11 years.

Discussion

The data analysis supported a few of the studies discussed in the review of literature, as well as revealed opportunities for further research. The findings showed that many of the study's participants were not satisfied with their credential program's behavior management training. However, the data also illustrated that participants do feel prepared to manage their classrooms, and were confident in those abilities when graduating from their credential programs. It is unclear as to what is influencing their confidence since many of them were dissatisfied with their credential program's preparation in this area. Further research using this data would be beneficial to see what positively affects credential candidates' confidence in managing a classroom. Post-credential classroom and behavior management preparation and confidence seem to be positively related; with this high rating for confidence among the participants' responses, it would be interesting to conduct further research to see if years of experience are positively influencing this variable.

Comparison of Findings with Existing Studies

This study's findings reflected similar data to studies discussed in the review of literature. The participants' responses in this study were similar to the results Merrett and Wheldall (1993) gathered after interviewing teachers about their satisfaction with their credential program training. In both cases, the majority of teachers who participated in the studies were dissatisfied with the initial management preparation offered within their credential programs.

The findings of this study also illustrated that additional training may positively influence teachers' confidence with classroom and behavior management. Similarly, the research study conducted by Baker (2005) found that it is essential for teachers to acquire some supplemental training in order for them to feel more capable to manage student behavior in the classroom. Baker's (2005) recommendations included diversifying additional management training for

teachers in order to meet their specific areas of need, thus positively impacting their confidence in the classroom.

Limitations of Study

There are several limitations this study acknowledges. First, the sample size is small. Since there were only twenty-eight participants surveyed, it is unknown if the data accurately reflects the larger population of general education teachers in Northern California school districts. Secondly, the sampling used was a nonprobability sample. This type of nonprobability sample, called purposive sampling, was chosen because it was convenient for the researcher, who had limited access to eligible participants. However, as mentioned above, this type of sample data does not necessarily reflect the larger population of general education teachers. Another limitation of this study was the site used to obtain participants. The researcher only surveyed one school site within a large Northern California county, so the results of the study may not be representative of smaller, rural school districts or schools located in other areas of California.

Although the survey was meticulously constructed, it was assumed that participants defined 'classroom management' and 'behavior management' the same as the researcher, and understood the interplay between classroom and behavior management within the survey questions. Stronger conclusions could have been drawn if these terms were specifically defined for participants at the beginning of the survey. Also, the survey did not ask what type of credential program (traditional or online) the participants attended, or from which specific school they received their credential, so it is unknown if any of these variables influenced the type of classroom and behavior management training they received.

Implications for Future Research

The data gathered from this study can be used to further the research in a few areas. A portion of the data revealed that a large number of the participants were dissatisfied with their initial behavior management training. It would be beneficial to discover more specifically why the participants were dissatisfied with their training programs. Interviewing these participants could reveal a more in depth analysis as to why they believe their credential program training did not adequately prepare them for managing their classrooms. This new data could then be used to help reevaluate the structure of credential program classes; so if needed, classroom and behavior management coursework could be more sufficiently represented.

Another area of interest that emerged from the data was the participants' confidence with classroom management. The survey results revealed that all of the participants felt confident in their abilities to manage student behavior in their classrooms. Further research to find out what specifically influences teachers' confidence would be beneficial. This study concludes that supplemental management training positively influences teachers' confidence levels; although it would be interesting to find out if a participant's level of experience affects their self-efficacy with regard to managing their classrooms.

As noted above, this study acknowledged 'classroom management' and 'behavior management' as interconnected management strategies within the classroom. Future studies could focus on either 'classroom management' or 'behavior management' as distinct topics in order to broaden the research on these important areas within educational pedagogy. Also, if researchers choose to do a similar study, they could use a larger sample size that would more closely reflect the greater population of teachers in California.

Overall Significance of the Study

The results of this study support the need for a reevaluation of classroom and behavior management training within credential programs. As other studies have revealed, effective management is needed for teachers to have classroom success; therefore it is vital that teacher candidates receive the proper training *before* entering the workforce. A more comprehensive training approach will help decrease the probability of teacher stress and burnout stemming from classroom and behavior management difficulties.

The participants in this study reported a high level of preparedness and confidence with regard to managing their classrooms. These results are positive and open the door for further research in order to determine, aside from their initial training, what helps teachers gain confidence and feel prepared to manage a classroom. With this newfound data, school districts, as well as individual teachers, will be able to help supplement and strengthen their classroom and behavior management knowledge.

Overall, this study sought to highlight the importance of classroom and behavior management preparation, and shed light on how this preparation influences teachers' confidence and preparedness in the classroom. Effective management is needed to first create a calm, focused atmosphere, so that the teacher can *then* launch into a well constructed lesson. As Wong and Wong (2009) affirm, "Classroom management overarches everything in the curriculum" (Wong & Wong, 2009, p. 80). Therefore, teachers who are able to master classroom and behavior management create a positive learning environment where their students can flourish and succeed.

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