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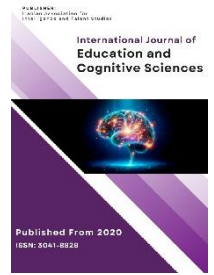
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Teachers' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Positive Behavior Support Systems

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) systems in educational settings.

Methods and Materials: Employing a qualitative research design, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 teachers who have experience implementing PBS in their classrooms. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse range of experiences. The interviews were designed to elicit in-depth insights into teachers' perceptions of PBS, focusing on the impact on student behavior, implementation strategies, challenges, and the role of leadership. Data were analyzed thematically to identify key themes and concepts related to the efficacy of PBS.

Findings: The analysis revealed six main themes: Impact of PBS on Student Behavior, Implementation Strategies, Perceived Benefits of PBS, Challenges and Barriers, Role of School Leadership, and Teacher Experiences and Perceptions. Teachers reported positive changes in student behavior, including increased engagement and reduced disruptions, as a result of implementing PBS. However, challenges such as resource limitations, the need for ongoing professional development, and the importance of school leadership support were also identified. The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of PBS implementation and its varied impacts on the educational environment.

Conclusion: This study underscores the potential of PBS systems to foster positive behavioral changes and improve the educational environment. However, it also highlights the complexities involved in implementing such systems, including the need for adequate resources, continuous teacher training, and strong leadership support. Understanding teachers' perceptions provides valuable insights into the factors that contribute to the success and challenges of PBS, offering guidance for its effective implementation in schools.

Keywords: Positive Behavior Support, PBS, teacher perceptions, student behavior, implementation strategies, educational leadership, classroom management

1. Introduction

Educational institutions have long grappled with the challenge of managing student behavior effectively to create a conducive learning environment. In this regard, Positive Behavior Support (PBS) systems, also known as School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), have emerged as a proactive approach to establishing a positive school climate and addressing antisocial behaviors. The essence of PBS lies in its emphasis on teaching appropriate behaviors and providing systems of reinforcement to promote desirable student conduct (Burke et al., 2004). This framework not only aims to improve the school environment but also seeks to enhance academic outcomes by reducing behavioral distractions. As such, understanding the impact and efficacy of PBS from the perspective of those at the frontline, namely teachers, is crucial for its successful implementation and sustainability.

Research has consistently highlighted the positive (Gage et al., 2017) impacts of PBS on both student behavior and academic achievement. Gage, Leite, Childs, and Kincaid (2017) demonstrated the average treatment effect of SWPBIS on school-level academic achievement in Florida, underscoring the academic benefits associated with a systematic, positive approach to behavior management (Gage et al., 2017). Similarly, Muscott, Mann, and LeBrun (2008) documented the successful implementation of PBS in New Hampshire, noting significant improvements in school climate and student behavior. These studies affirm the potential of PBS as a transformative approach to managing student behavior and fostering a positive educational environment.

However, the success of PBS initiatives heavily relies on the perceptions, attitudes, and engagement of the teaching staff. Teachers are the primary agents of change in implementing PBS strategies; hence, their perspectives on the efficacy of these systems are instrumental in determining their success or failure. Kelm and McIntosh (2012) explored the effects of school-wide PBS on teacher self-efficacy, revealing that engagement with PBS practices could enhance teachers' beliefs in their capabilities to manage classroom behavior effectively (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). This finding is critical, as teacher self-efficacy has been linked to higher levels of student achievement and improved classroom management (Baroudi & Shaya, 2022; Marschall, 2022; Nichols et al., 2020; Virgana et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2022).

Despite the documented benefits, the implementation of PBS is not without its challenges. Issues such as resource

allocation, teacher training, and the sustainability of interventions pose significant barriers to the effective adoption of PBS practices. Deltour, Dachet, Monseur, and Baye (2021) examined the influence of SWPBIS on teachers' collective efficacy, highlighting the importance of adequate training and support in fostering a sense of collective competence among educators (Deltour et al., 2021). Moreover, the study by Reyes-Rodríguez et al. (2021) on teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy to handle bullying further emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems to address specific behavioral issues within the PBS framework (Reyes-Rodríguez et al., 2021).

The role of school leadership cannot be understated in facilitating the adoption and implementation of PBS (Tanucan et al., 2022; Yıldız, 2021). Leadership support, policy development, and the allocation of resources are pivotal factors that influence the success of PBS initiatives (McIntosh et al., 2016). School leaders play a crucial role in setting the vision, providing the necessary support, and fostering a culture that values and prioritizes positive behavioral interventions (McIntosh et al., 2016).

Despite the growing body of research on PBS, gaps remain in our understanding of teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of these systems. While existing studies have focused on specific aspects of PBS, such as its impact on student behavior and academic outcomes, less is known about how teachers perceive the overall efficacy of PBS and the factors that influence their engagement with these practices. Additionally, the dynamic and evolving nature of educational settings necessitates ongoing research to capture the current challenges and opportunities associated with implementing PBS in diverse contexts. This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of PBS systems in educational settings. Through a qualitative research design employing semi-structured interviews, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences with PBS, including the perceived benefits, challenges, and the role of school leadership in supporting PBS initiatives.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This qualitative study was designed to explore teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of PBS systems in educational settings. The research employed a phenomenological approach to deeply understand teachers' experiences and

viewpoints, thus allowing for a rich, detailed exploration of their perspectives on PBS systems.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of experiences with PBS systems. Eligibility criteria included teachers who have been actively involved in implementing PBS strategies for at least one year in their current educational setting. This criterion was set to ensure that participants had sufficient experience with PBS to provide informed perspectives. A total of 15 teachers from various educational levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and districts were recruited. Efforts were made to include a balanced representation regarding years of experience, gender, and school type to enrich the study's data pool.

The study aimed for theoretical saturation, a point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data. To achieve this, data collection continued until the analysis of subsequent interviews ceased to reveal new insights, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of PBS efficacy. This approach guaranteed the depth and breadth of the qualitative analysis, reflecting a robust representation of teachers' experiences.

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines to protect participants' confidentiality and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

2.2. Measures

Data collection was conducted solely through semi-structured interviews, which were designed to elicit in-depth insights into teachers' perceptions of PBS efficacy. The interview guide comprised open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and reflections on PBS systems. Key topics included the impact of PBS on student behavior, the challenges and benefits of implementing PBS, and teachers' roles and experiences within these systems.

Interviews were conducted remotely via secure video conferencing platforms to accommodate participants'

schedules and geographic locations, ensuring a wider range of perspectives. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent for accuracy in data analysis.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved a systematic process of coding and identifying themes and patterns within the data. Initial codes were generated inductively, directly from the data, and then organized into broader themes that captured the essence of teachers' perceptions of PBS systems. The analysis was iterative, with continuous comparison across data sets to refine themes and ensure their alignment with the study's objectives. Trustworthiness and validity were enhanced through member checking, where participants were invited to review the accuracy of the findings related to their experiences.

3. Findings and Results

In the study, a total of 24 participants were recruited to explore teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of PBS systems in educational settings. The demographic characteristics of the participants revealed a diverse group in terms of age, gender, educational background, and years of experience. Specifically, the participants comprised 16 females (66.7%) and 8 males (33.3%), highlighting a female predominance in the sample. Age-wise, participants ranged from 25 to 58 years, with a median age of 42 years, indicating a broad representation of both early career and experienced teachers. Regarding their educational backgrounds, 12 participants (50%) held a Bachelor's degree in Education, 10 (41.7%) had attained a Master's degree in Education or a related field, and 2 (8.3%) possessed a doctoral degree, reflecting a high level of educational attainment among the group. The years of teaching experience among participants varied widely, with 6 (25%) having 1-5 years of experience, 10 (41.7%) possessing 6-15 years of experience, and 8 (33.3%) with over 16 years of experience in the education sector.

Table 1*Main Themes, Subthemes, and Concepts*

Main Themes	Subthemes	Concepts (Open Codes)
Impact of PBS on Student Behavior	Positive Behavioral Changes	Increased academic engagement, Decrease in disruptive behavior, Improvement in peer interactions
	Resistance and Challenges	Student resistance, Inconsistency in behavior change, Lack of engagement with PBS
Implementation Strategies	Training and Professional Development	Adequacy and accessibility of training, Impact of ongoing support, Utilization of external resources
	Collaboration and Communication	Inter-staff collaboration, Communication with parents, Effective team meetings
	Resource and Support Needs	Material resource allocation, Time management strategies, Financial constraints
	Evaluation and Feedback	Monitoring PBS outcomes, Feedback mechanisms, Continuous improvement processes
Perceived Benefits of PBS	Academic Outcomes	Changes in academic performance, Impact on classroom environment, Student engagement in learning activities
	Social and Emotional Learning	Development of emotional regulation, Enhancements in social skills, Positive student relationships
Challenges and Barriers	Structural and Systemic Issues	Institutional support, Policy limitations, Infrastructure constraints
	Personnel and Training Barriers	Staff turnover, Adequacy of initial and ongoing training, Educator resistance
Role of School Leadership	Leadership Engagement	Leadership support, Role modeling by administrators, Strategic vision for PBS
	Policy Development and Enforcement	Creation of supportive policies, Enforcement consistency, Policy adaptability
Teacher Experiences and Perceptions	Motivation Factors	Belief in PBS effectiveness, Desire for positive classroom environment, Observations of student progress
	Challenges in Daily Practice	Managing difficult behaviors, Balancing PBS with academic demands, Parent concerns
	Reflections on Professional Practice	Impact on teaching style, Professional growth, Teacher-student dynamics
	Adaptation to Change	Adjusting teaching methods, Adapting to student needs, Flexibility in implementation

Our study identified several key themes regarding teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of PBS systems. These themes, along with their subthemes and concepts derived from open coding of the interview data, are outlined below.

Impact of PBS on Student Behavior: Teachers reported observing positive behavioral changes in students, including increased academic engagement and a decrease in disruptive behaviors. One teacher noted, "After implementing PBS, I've seen a significant reduction in classroom disruptions, allowing for more effective teaching and learning." However, challenges such as student resistance and inconsistency in behavior change were also highlighted. "Some students resist the changes at first, finding it hard to adapt to the new expectations," another educator shared.

Implementation Strategies: The effectiveness of training and professional development emerged as a crucial factor, with teachers emphasizing the need for adequacy and accessibility. Collaboration and communication within the staff and with parents were seen as vital for the success of PBS. The availability of resources and support was another area of concern, with one teacher stating, "We often find ourselves scrambling for resources to fully implement PBS strategies."

Perceived Benefits of PBS: Academic outcomes and social-emotional learning were two significant benefits noted by participants. Teachers reported improvements in academic performance and student engagement. The social and emotional development of students, including better emotional regulation and enhanced social skills, was frequently mentioned. "PBS has not just improved behavior but has profoundly impacted our students' social skills and emotional well-being," commented one participant.

Challenges and Barriers: Structural and systemic issues, such as institutional support and policy limitations, were identified as barriers to the effective implementation of PBS. Teachers also discussed personnel and training barriers, highlighting staff turnover and the adequacy of training as challenges.

Role of School Leadership: The engagement of school leadership with PBS was seen as a determinant of its success. Teachers underscored the importance of leadership support, policy development, and enforcement. "Our administrators play a crucial role in advocating for PBS and ensuring we have the resources we need," a teacher explained.

Teacher Experiences and Perceptions: Motivation factors, challenges in daily practice, and reflections on

professional practice were key themes. Teachers expressed a strong belief in the effectiveness of PBS and noted the importance of adapting to change. "Seeing the positive changes in my students motivates me every day," said one teacher, highlighting the personal impact of PBS implementation.

Adaptation to Change: The ability to adjust teaching methods and adapt to student needs was emphasized as critical for the successful integration of PBS. Teachers discussed the need for flexibility and the challenges of adapting to diverse student populations.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of PBS systems in educational settings, employing a qualitative research design focused on semi-structured interviews. Our findings reveal a multifaceted view of PBS, highlighting its positive impacts on student behavior and academic outcomes, improvements in teacher self-efficacy, and the essential role of continuous support and resources for sustaining PBS initiatives. Teachers reported that the implementation of PBS led to observable positive changes in student behavior, including increased engagement and a decrease in disruptive actions. Additionally, the study underscored the importance of teacher training, collaboration, and the role of school leadership in the successful adoption and implementation of PBS systems. The results of this study affirm the potential of PBS as a transformative approach to behavior management, capable of fostering a positive educational environment and enhancing academic and social-emotional learning outcomes. The evidence suggests that when properly supported, PBS can empower teachers, positively influence student behavior, and contribute to a constructive school climate.

The qualitative analysis of teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of PBS systems in educational settings revealed six main themes, encompassing various categories that provide a nuanced understanding of the subject. The identified themes include the Impact of PBS on Student Behavior, Implementation Strategies, Perceived Benefits of PBS, Challenges and Barriers, Role of School Leadership, and Teacher Experiences and Perceptions. These themes collectively cover a wide range of factors influencing the effectiveness and reception of PBS systems, from direct outcomes on student behavior and learning environments to

the broader challenges of implementation and the critical role of leadership and teacher engagement.

Impact of PBS on Student Behavior emerged as a prominent theme, with categories highlighting Positive Behavioral Changes, Resistance and Challenges, and Long-term Behavioral Effects. Teachers noted increased academic engagement and a decrease in disruptive behaviors as key outcomes of PBS, reflecting its potential to foster a conducive learning environment. However, resistance from some students and challenges in maintaining consistent behavior changes were identified as significant concerns. The long-term effects of PBS on behavior and academic success were also discussed, emphasizing the importance of sustained implementation for enduring benefits.

Implementation Strategies focused on the practical aspects of PBS deployment, with categories such as Training and Professional Development, Collaboration and Communication, and Resource and Support Needs. Teachers emphasized the critical need for adequate training and ongoing professional development to effectively implement PBS strategies. The importance of collaboration among staff and effective communication with parents was highlighted, alongside the necessity for sufficient resources and support to overcome logistical challenges.

Perceived Benefits of PBS identified Academic Outcomes, Social and Emotional Learning, and Teacher and Classroom Dynamics as key categories. Teachers reported improvements in academic performance and student engagement, alongside enhanced social skills and emotional regulation among students. The benefits of PBS extended to teacher well-being and classroom management, with a positive impact on the overall classroom atmosphere and teacher job satisfaction.

Challenges and Barriers addressed the obstacles to implementing PBS, including Structural and Systemic Issues, Personnel and Training Barriers, and Adaptation and Flexibility challenges. These categories underscored the complexities of integrating PBS within existing educational frameworks, the challenges posed by staff turnover and training adequacy, and the need for PBS strategies to be adaptable to diverse student needs and educational environments.

Role of School Leadership underscored the importance of Support and Advocacy, Policy Development and Enforcement, and Engagement with PBS for its success. Leadership engagement was identified as a pivotal factor, with school leaders' support and advocacy, policy development, and direct involvement in PBS initiatives

playing critical roles in facilitating effective implementation and sustainability.

Teacher Experiences and Perceptions revealed insights into Motivation Factors, Challenges in Daily Practice, Reflections on Professional Practice, and Adaptation to Change. Teachers discussed their motivations for engaging with PBS, the daily challenges they face, their reflections on how PBS has influenced their professional practice, and the necessity for adaptability in response to changing student needs and educational landscapes.

The positive impact of PBS on student behavior, noted in our findings, aligns with the research of Burke, Ayres, & Hagan-Burke (2004), who highlighted the role of school-wide PBS in preventing antisocial behaviors (Burke et al., 2004). This correlation emphasizes the foundational principle of PBS: that proactive support and reinforcement of positive behaviors can substantially reduce the occurrence of disruptive actions among students. Moreover, our findings contribute to the body of evidence suggesting that a well-implemented PBS system not only fosters a positive school climate but also directly influences students' academic and social success (Gage et al., 2017).

Teachers in our study reported an increase in their self-efficacy following the implementation of PBS strategies, a finding that resonates with the work of Kelm and McIntosh (2012). The observed boost in teacher confidence can be attributed to the structured support and clear guidelines provided by PBS frameworks, which equip educators with the tools to manage classroom behavior more effectively (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). This increase in self-efficacy is crucial, as Nichols, Nichols, & Rupley (2020) have established a link between teacher efficacy and the successful implementation of tiered instructional frameworks, suggesting that teacher perceptions can significantly influence the adoption and effectiveness of educational interventions (Nichols et al., 2020).

Challenges in implementing PBS, such as resource allocation and the need for continuous professional development, were also echoed in our study. These concerns are consistent with Deltour, Dachet, Monseur, & Baye (2021), who noted the importance of teacher training and collective efficacy in the success of SWPBIS (Deltour et al., 2021). Our findings highlight the necessity for ongoing support and resources to maintain the fidelity of PBS interventions, underscoring the critical role of school leadership in facilitating these processes (McIntosh et al., 2016).

Moreover, the significance of leadership support in the effective implementation of PBS systems, as identified in our study, aligns with the observations of Ross, Romer, & Horner (2011). Their work suggested that teacher well-being and the overall success of PBS are significantly enhanced by the active involvement and support of school leaders (Ross et al., 2011). This connection underscores the need for a committed leadership that prioritizes and advocates for PBS initiatives, thereby ensuring their sustainability and impact.

The perceived benefits of PBS on both academic outcomes and social-emotional learning, highlighted by our participants, contribute to the growing evidence supporting the multifaceted impact of PBS. Similar to findings by Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun (2008), our study suggests that PBS systems extend beyond mere behavior management, influencing various aspects of the educational environment that are critical to student success (Muscott et al., 2008).

In addressing the challenges and barriers to PBS implementation, our study echoes the concerns regarding structural and systemic issues, as well as the need for adaptability in response to diverse student needs (Reyes-Rodríguez et al., 2021). These challenges underscore the importance of a flexible, responsive approach to PBS that can accommodate the unique contexts of different schools and student populations.

This study is subject to several limitations. The reliance on qualitative methods and a relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. While the in-depth insights gained from semi-structured interviews provide valuable perspectives on teachers' experiences with PBS, the specific contexts of these experiences may not be universally applicable. Additionally, the study focused solely on teachers' perceptions, excluding the viewpoints of other stakeholders such as students, parents, and administrative staff, which might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of PBS systems.

Future research should aim to address the limitations noted by incorporating a broader range of perspectives from different stakeholders involved in the educational process. Quantitative studies with larger sample sizes could complement qualitative insights, offering a more generalized understanding of PBS's impact. Longitudinal studies could also provide valuable data on the long-term effects of PBS on student behavior and academic performance. Additionally, exploring the role of specific PBS components in various educational settings might uncover critical factors contributing to the success or challenges of implementing PBS strategies.

The findings from this study have important implications for educational practice. Schools considering the implementation of PBS should prioritize comprehensive training and support for teachers, emphasizing the development of self-efficacy and collaborative practices. School leadership plays a critical role in the success of PBS initiatives; thus, administrators should actively support these programs through policy development, resource allocation, and by fostering a school culture that values PBS. The study also highlights the necessity for continuous evaluation and adaptation of PBS strategies to meet the evolving needs of students and educators, ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of PBS interventions in promoting positive educational outcomes.

Authors' Contributions

In this article, the corresponding author was responsible for the intervention implementation, data analysis, and manuscript writing, while the other authors supervised the data analysis and manuscript writing.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance

of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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