

PERSPECTIVES IMPACTING PBIS IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON IMPLEMENTING PBIS WITH FIDELITY:
A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

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by

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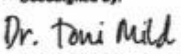
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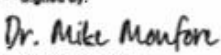
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ABSTRACT

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based, multi-tiered framework aimed at supporting preventive and intervention practices, promoting social-emotional skills, and improving academic outcomes for all students. Program-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PWPBIS), an adaptation of PBIS for early childhood programs, emphasizes promoting social-emotional skills and implementing preventive strategies to reduce challenging behaviors. Although PBIS is widely researched and validated, there is limited research on implementing PBIS with fidelity, especially within preschool settings. This case study aimed to examine preschool classrooms and assess how teachers' perspectives influence effective PBIS implementation. Data were collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews on PWPBIS and analyzed thematically to identify both key themes and barriers to successful implementation. The main themes that emerged included teachers' attitudes and perceptions, collaborative support systems, professional development training, staff buy-in, and perceptions of observations. Notable barriers included a lack of staff buy-in, insufficient professional development, misapplications of PBIS, persistent challenging behaviors, and limited support systems. These findings highlight the critical need for staff buy-in, consistent support, and ongoing professional development to sustain PBIS implementation with fidelity.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandfather, Pap-Pap. Although you are no longer with us, your memory remains a constant source of inspiration and strength in my life. Your wisdom and support shaped who I am today. I am forever grateful for the impact you had on my journey.

Until we meet again.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Beginning in 2015 and continuing forward, there has been a substantial push to implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) aimed at enhancing student outcomes, fostering the development of social-emotional skills, and mitigating challenging behaviors in school environments. Multi-Tiered System of Support is a structured, evidence-based framework designed to tailor support strategies based on the specific needs identified in students (Nese et al., 2021). Chitiyo et al. (2019) states a universally implemented evidence-based practice within the framework of MTSS is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a three-tiered evidence-based framework designed to foster prevention and intervention practices, supporting the enhancement of social-emotional competencies, and academic performance for every student. According to Chitiyo et al., this comprehensive structure incorporates preventive measures across three tiers, encompassing universal and proactive practices in all contexts to mitigate challenging behaviors.

To assess the effectiveness of PBIS in a school, especially in a preschool classroom, the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) was created. The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) was designed to evaluate the fidelity of PBIS within the preschool setting, aiming to support teachers in implementing practices associated with the three-tiered framework (Snyder et al., 2013).

Despite ample research on the background and validity of PBIS, there is a limited amount of research on ensuring implementation of PBIS to fidelity. One of the most notable constraints is the shortage of research on PBIS within the preschool setting (Smith et al., 2010). The retrospective case study goal was to examine preschool classrooms and the impact that teachers'

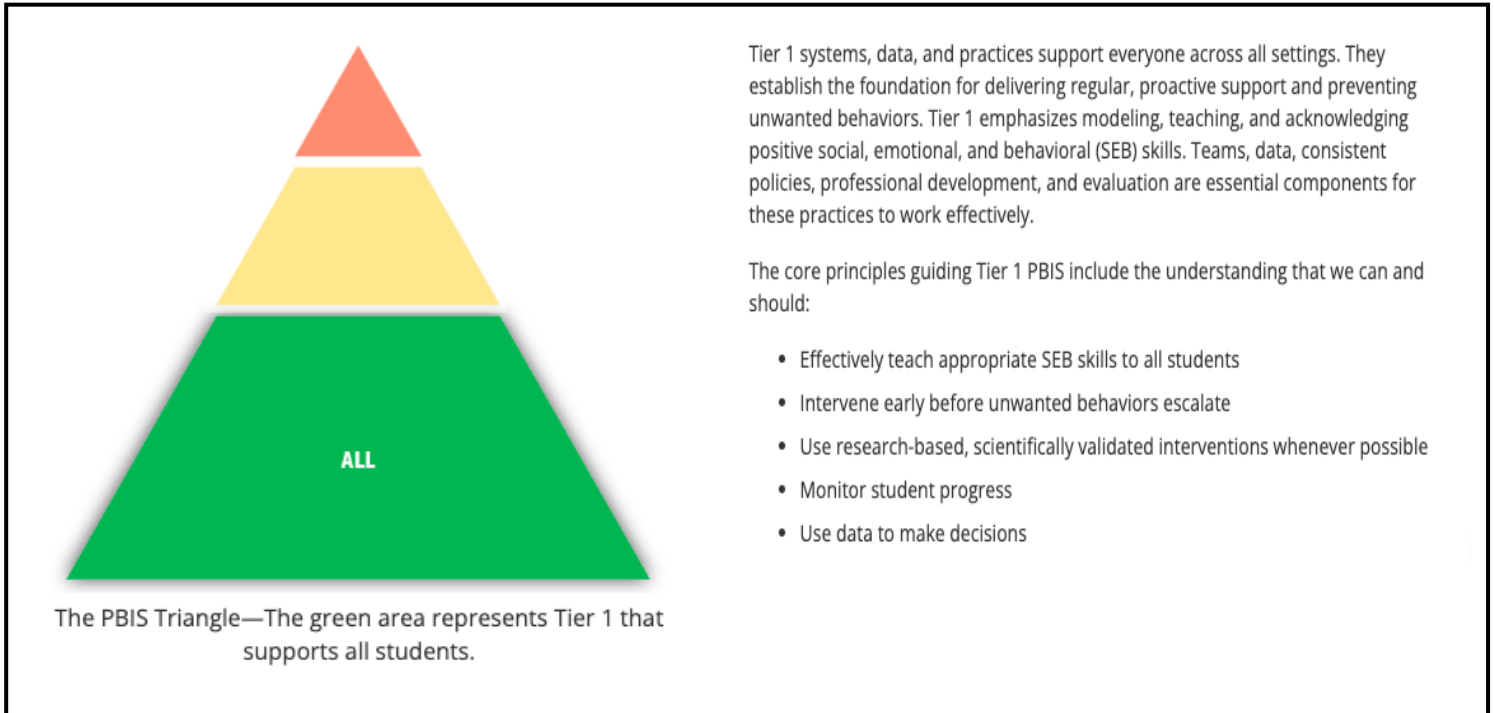
perspectives have on effectively implementing PBIS. To investigate this, the case study conducted in-depth interviews with preschool teachers who implemented PBIS in their classrooms and had existing TPOT observations. Additionally, the study analyzed existing TPOT data to identify commonalities in program training, understanding of PBIS, and teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward PBIS.

PBIS Tiers

The Pyramid Model comprises three tiers: Primary (Tier 1), Secondary (Tier 2), and Tertiary (Tier 3). The first tier focuses on implementing school-wide universal measures to ensure all students benefit from preventative supports, including routines, expectations, and rules (Snyder et al., 2013). The Primary Tier, also known as primary prevention or universal interventions, involves implementing these measures for all students across the school. The primary goal of this tier is to decrease the occurrence of challenging behaviors among students, specifically targeting 80% to 90% of students who do not exhibit challenging behaviors (Sugai et al., 2000). The fundamental emphasis of the Primary Tier is on incorporating teaching practices to establish a high-quality supportive environment and cultivate nurturing and responsive relationships. The objective is to promote prosocial behavioral expectations and equip staff with preventive strategies to address undesirable behavior. It involves implementing universal teaching practices in the classroom, such as establishing a daily routine, enforcing expectations, positively stating rules, and providing directions (Snyder et al., 2013). Additionally, an effective leadership team should be established, along with a system for regularly collecting discipline data and ongoing monitoring for future decision-making. Overall, the formation and implementation of the Primary Tier are essential for the effective transition to the Secondary Tier (Nese et al., 2021). Figure 1.1 references the Primary Tier (*Center on PBIS, 2024*).

Figure 1.1

The PBIS Triangle – Primary Tier



Note. Figure 1.1 The PBIS Triangle, Primary Tier (Tier 1). From *Center on PBIS (2024)*.

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [Website]. (<https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1>).

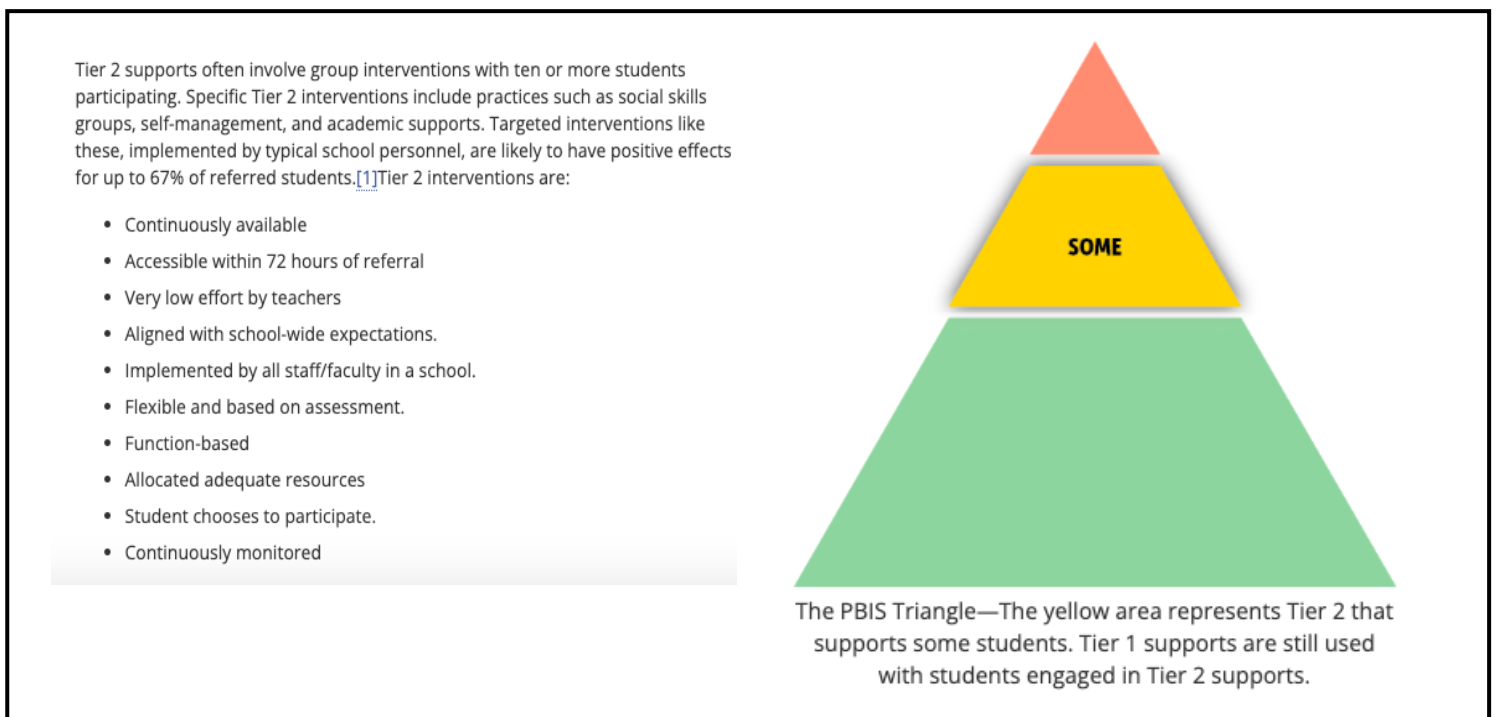
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The Secondary Tier is classified as targeted interventions designed for students who may be at risk of exhibiting challenging behavior (Sugai et al., 2000). These interventions complement the universal practices, which may not be as effective for certain students. Targeted interventions apply to 5% - 15% of students. The objective of the Secondary Tier is to concentrate on promoting prosocial behaviors, developing social-emotional skills, preventing the escalation of challenging behavior, and identifying potential triggers for such behaviors. Specifically for this tier, interventions should be easily accessible, and include explicit instruction on social skills, identifying feelings, expressing emotions appropriately, problem

solving skills, and developing friendships (Snyder et al., 2013). Additionally, interventions must be implemented efficiently and incorporate a social skills curriculum. In this tier, the Tier 2 team is responsible for establishing a system to identify students who may require Secondary Tier supports. The identification system may involve using a screening tool completed by teachers, a specified number of office discipline referrals as grounds for Secondary Tier supports, and/or recommendations from parents. Interventions commonly employed in this tier include mentoring programs, social skill curriculums, and check-in/check-out programs (Nese et al., 2021). Figure 2.1 represents Tier 2 targeted supports (*Center on PBIS, 2024*).

Figure 2.1

The PBIS Triangle – Targeted Supports



Note. Figure 2.1 The PBIS Triangle, Targeted Supports (Tier 2). From *Center on PBIS (2024)*.

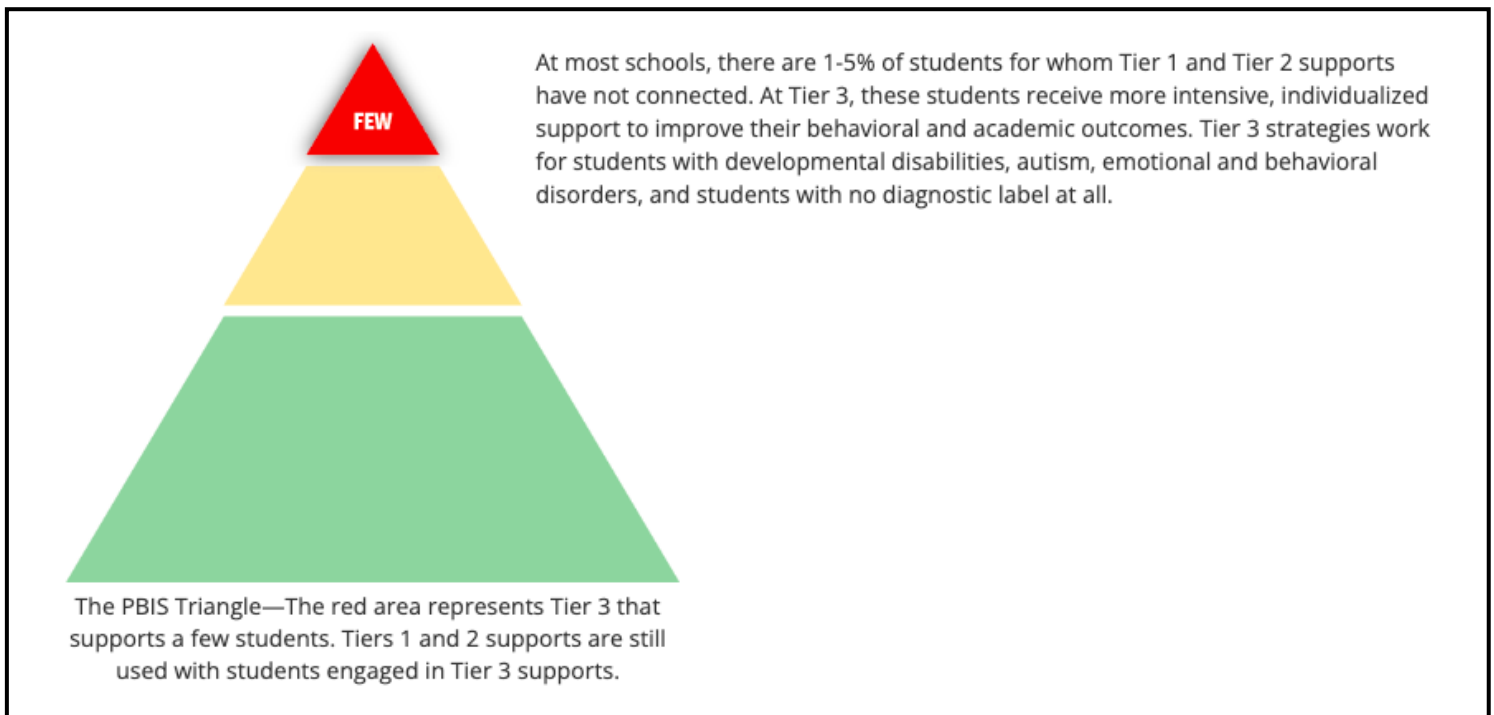
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [Website]. (<https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-2>).

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The Tertiary Tier is identified as intensive interventions and individual supports. These specialized interventions cater to students with the most substantial and persistent challenging behaviors and academic needs (Nese et al., 2021). The apex of the pyramid encompasses approximately 1% - 7% of students (Sugai et al., 2000). Tier 3 is dedicated to collecting extensive data through Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and observations to identify motivational factors. It involves creating individualized plans to address the specific needs of students. Additionally, Tier 3 aims to diminish the intensity of challenging behaviors exhibited by these students (Nese et al., 2021; Sugai et al., 2000). Figure 3.1 depicts the Tertiary Tier (*Center on PBIS, 2024*).

Figure 3.1

The PBIS Triangle – Tertiary Tier



Note. Figure 3.1 The PBIS Triangle, Tertiary Tier (Tier 3). From *Center on PBIS (2024)*.

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [Website]. (<https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-3>).

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School Wide PBIS, Program Wide PBIS, and The Pyramid Model

School–Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) is a multi-tiered positive behavior support system with three core principles: promoting evidence-based practices, fostering system-level change, and enhancing local capacity for sustaining effective practices (Frey et al., 2010). Currently, over 26,000 schools in the United States have adopted SWPBIS, aiming to establish school-wide systems and procedures that target social-emotional skills (Nelen et al., 2021).

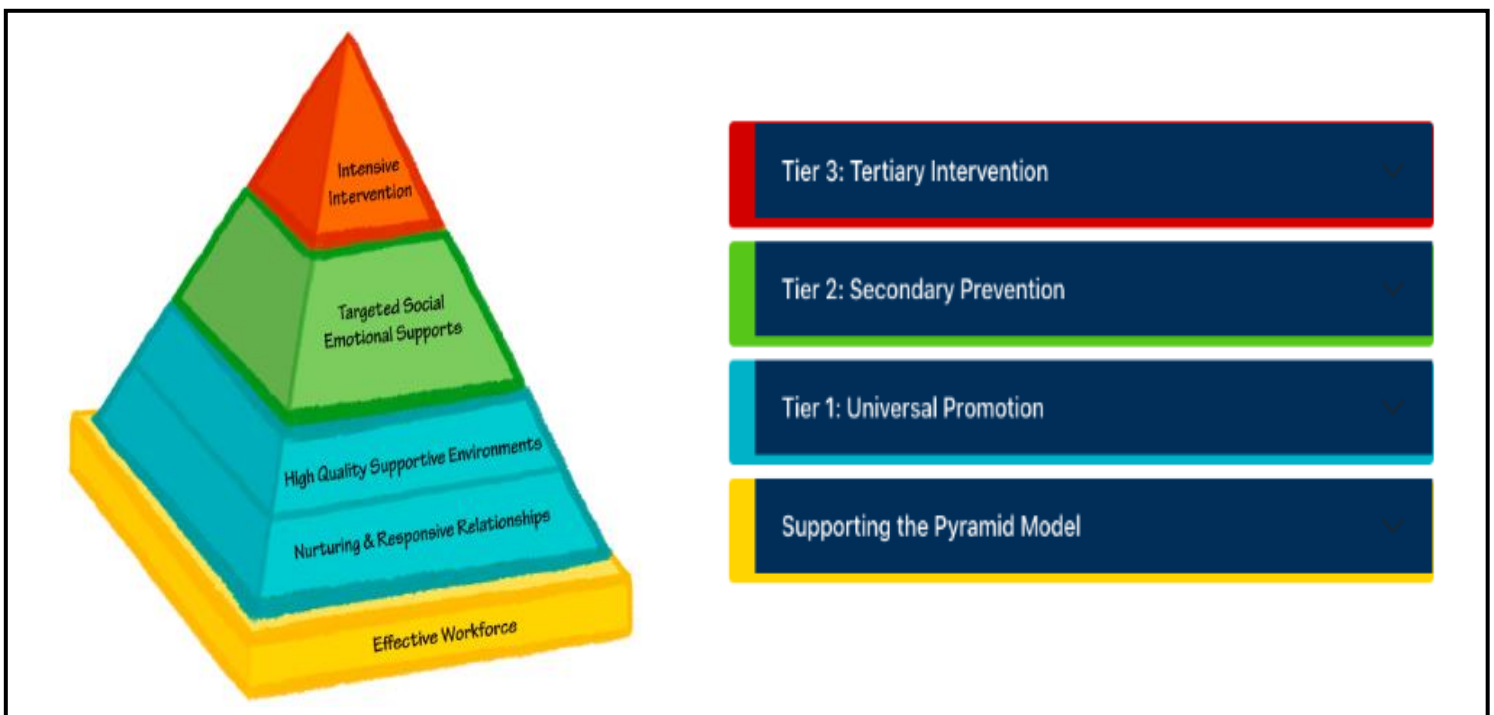
Conversely, as many early childhood settings lack the administrative structure found in a school district, Program Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) emerged as an extension of SWPBIS tailored for early childhood settings, adopting a prevention-oriented approach (Frey et al., 2010). Both SWPBIS and PWPBIS share the common goal of fostering social-emotional competencies and reducing challenging behaviors across all tiers (Burke et al., 2015). While there are few distinctions between SWPBIS and PWPBIS, some challenges prompted the Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) to develop training and support for early childhood programs and staff to support a new measurement of PBIS within the early childhood context (*CSEFEL: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*, n.d.). Additionally, CSEFEL created a Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) to monitor the fidelity of implementation within the early childhood context (Frey et al., 2010). This national resource is funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau and is focused on evidence–based practices for early childhood programs (*CSEFEL: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*, n.d.).

Another research-based framework designed to promote social-emotional competencies and prevent challenging behaviors in early childhood settings is the Pyramid Model for

Promoting Young Children’s Social-Emotional Competence. Hemmeter et al. (2016) discusses this Pyramid Model as a framework specifically tailored for young children and parallels the three tiers of PBIS. Both the Pyramid Model and PWPBIS frameworks concentrate on the implementation of universal practices to promote social-emotional competencies, secondary practices for students who may be at risk, and individualized practices for those with persistent challenging behavior. Hemmeter et al. (2016) mentions a slight distinction between the two frameworks is that the Pyramid Model is a research-informed framework incorporating developmentally appropriate practices specifically designed as interactional and instructional support practices in early childhood settings. In essence, the Pyramid Model offers the framework and practices for the implementation of PWPBIS within early childhood settings. Figure 4.1 shows the Pyramid Model framework for early childhood settings (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, 2024).

Figure 4.1

Pyramid Model Framework



Note. Figure 4.1 The Pyramid Model Framework. From *National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations* (2024). National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (2024). *Tiers - National Center for Pyramid*. (<https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/tiers/>) Copyright 2024 National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations.

In summary, there are few distinctions between SWPBIS, PWPBIS, and the Pyramid Model for Promoting Young Children’s Social – Emotional Competence, particularly in the context they serve, and the Pyramid Model is the framework of practices for PWPBIS. This paper will specifically focus on PWPBIS as it serves as an extension for early childhood programs, emphasizing the promotion of social-emotional competencies, and preventive strategies to reduce challenging behavior.

Overview of TPOT

The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) is a fidelity instrument designed to assess interventions based on the Pyramid Model. Snyder et al. (2013) reports that it serves as a professional development tool to aid teachers in implementing PBIS practices, emphasizing social-emotional competencies, and behavior support in early childhood settings. TPOT was formulated to evaluate a preschool teacher's comprehensive implementation of universal and targeted teaching practices across the classroom. Additionally, it assesses the teacher's ability to personalize teaching practices and execute individual behavior support plans at the tertiary level. This tool is intended for trained coaches to offer support and feedback to teachers regarding their implementation of PBIS practices and program-wide professional development.

According to Hemmeter et al. (2017), TPOT is segmented into three primary components: environmental arrangements, key practices, and red flags. Each of these components is further subdivided into subcomponents. There are fourteen key practice

subcomponents and sixteen environmental and red flag subcomponents for 114 key teaching practices. The observation process requires two hours to observe all subcomponents during child-directed activities, teacher-directed activities, and transitions, followed by a 15–20-minute interview.

As TPOT is a judgment-based assessment, observers are required to undergo a two-day training to familiarize themselves with the tool and learn how to score the key practices. Over the course of two days, observers learn to use the TPOT instrument, including key definitions, scoring guidance, and indicators. Additionally, they are trained to observe and conduct interviews based on a 2.5-hour video, which they use to score the TPOT and check for reliability (*TPOT™ Seminar - Brookes Publishing Co., 2022*). Hemmeter et al. (2017) notes observers must demonstrate reliability by achieving a score of 80% or higher when scoring a two-hour video and interview on the second day. Eight of the key teaching practices are scored solely based on observation, three key teaching practices are scored through a combination of observation and interview, and the remaining three key teaching practices are scored exclusively from the interview. Furthermore, all but three red flag indicators are scored solely based on observation. The effective strategies for responding to challenging behavior are scored each time a challenging behavior occurs during the observation. Table 5.1 depicts TPOT's key practices.

Essentially, the importance of the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) lies in its role as a fidelity instrument to assess the implementation of Pyramid Model interventions in preschool settings. Hemmeter et al. (2017) explains that TPOT serves as a crucial professional development tool, aiding teachers in implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) practices focused on social-emotional competencies and behavior support. It plays a

pivotal role in ensuring the effective application of evidence-based strategies to enhance the overall well-being and behavior of preschoolers.

Table 5.1

Teaching Pyramid Observation Key Practice Items

206	School Mental Health (2018) 10:202–213	
Table 1 Teaching pyramid observation tool key practices items and number of observable indicators associated with each item	Key practices item	Number of observable indicators
	Schedules, routines, and activities ^a	10
	Transitions between activities ^a	8
	Supportive conversations ^a	10
	Promoting children's engagement ^a	9
	Providing directions ^a	7
	Collaborative teaming ^a	9
	Teaching behavior expectations ^a	7
	Teaching social skills and emotional competencies ^a	8
	Teaching children to express emotions ^b	8
	Teaching problem-solving ^b	9
	Teaching friendship skills ^b	9
	Interventions for children with persistent challenging behavior ^c	5
	Connecting with families ^c	8
	Supporting family use of <i>Pyramid Model</i> practices ^c	
	^a Scored via observation	
	^b Scored via observation or interview	
	^c Scored primarily via interview	

Note. Table 5.1 Teaching Pyramid Observation Key Practice Items. From Using the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) to support implementation of Social–Emotional teaching practices. *School Mental Health* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-017-9239-y>.

Statement of the Problem

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and the Pyramid Model are not recent developments; however, what is relatively recent is TPOT. There are limited studies examining TPOT and its effective use as a professional development tool in preschool settings.

There is a shortage of research addressing teachers' comprehension of PBIS and their proficiency in implementing Pyramid Model Interventions. Consequently, there is a need to explore how a teacher's perspective influences their capability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity.

Research Question and Subquestions

1. How do the attitudes and perspectives of preschool teachers impact their capacity to implement Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) with fidelity within the classroom setting?

1.1 What are the beliefs and opinions of preschool teachers towards Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?

1.2 What beliefs do preschool teachers hold regarding sufficient training in Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to implement with fidelity within the classroom?

1.3 What are the barriers preventing preschool teachers from effectively implementing Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports practices and interventions?

1.4 How do you feel about the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) overall?

Definition of Terms

MTSS: Multi – Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is an evidence-based system structured framework that emphasizes the use of a range of support strategies aligned with the intensity of students' needs (Nese et al., 2021).

PBS: Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a broad term used to describe the application of positive behavioral interventions and systems aimed at accomplishing positive changes in socially significant behavior (Sugai et al., 2000).

FBA: Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) entails identifying problem behaviors and creating interventions to enhance or eliminate them (*PaTTAN - Home*, 2018).

PBIS: Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is a structured, evidence-based framework with tiers designed to support students' behavioral, academic, emotional, social, and mental health (*Center on PBIS*, 2024).

SWPBIS: School – Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) is a multi-tiered framework aimed to at fostering a culture of support and behavior management to boost emotional, social, academic, and behavioral outcomes for all students (*Center on PBIS*, 2024).

PWPBIS: Program – Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PWPBIS) is an prevention-oriented approach that is an extension of SWPBIS to address challenging behaviors in early childhood settings. (Frey et al., 2010; *PaTTAN - Home*, 2018).

TIER 1: The universal level provides support to all students, emphasizing the teaching of social-emotional competencies, prosocial skills, and behavior expectations (*Center on PBIS*, 2024).

TIER 2: The targeted level of interventions and supports offers additional assistance to students, providing them with teaching and opportunities to practice prosocial skills (*Center on PBIS*, 2024).

TIER 3: The intensive and individual level includes a formal assessment to provide students with an individual plan and interventions to match the function of the behavior (*Center on PBIS*, 2024).

TPOT: “Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) is an instrument designed to measure a practitioner’s implementation of the environmental, interactional, and instructional practices associated with the Pyramid Model. It was developed to measure the fidelity with which

preschool teachers implement Pyramid Model teaching practices” (Hemmeter et al., 2017, p. 205).

Implementation Fidelity: Concentrates on the contextual factors that facilitate the implementation of the intervention and its fundamental components (Snyder et al., 2013)

CSEFEL: “Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) focuses on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness in children birth – 5 years old” (*CSEFEL: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*, n.d., sec. home).

Pyramid Model for Promoting Young Children’s Social – Emotional Competence:

“Framework for organizing research – based practices to use in the early childhood classrooms to promote social – emotional competence and prevent and address children’s challenging behavior. This framework mirrors elements found in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports” (Hemmeter et al., 2016, para. 4).

BOQ: Benchmarks of Quality is an assessment tool to determine progress and plan future actions on Pyramid Model practices (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, 2024).

Significance of Study

There has been a significant amount of research conducted on SWPBIS and the relevance it plays in social-emotional competencies and reducing challenging behavior. Nonetheless, there has been less research examining how teachers' perspectives affect their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity, particularly the importance of fidelity. According to Hemmeter et al. (2017), a review was conducted on over 200 social-emotional learning interventions and their outcomes. The review concluded that there were issues with the fidelity of implementation. The evaluation of fidelity is crucial for connecting the implementation of practices to child outcomes

and for establishing the effectiveness of interventions used in educational settings. Additionally, as per Hemmeter et al. (2016), there are no published studies to date that have investigated the classroom-wide implementation of Pyramid Model practices and their effects on classroom, teacher, and child outcomes.

Furthermore, studies conducted between 1984 and 2003, assessing social validity measures, revealed that only 26% of the studies incorporated such measures. Another study suggests early childhood settings need to examine possible barriers to implementing high-quality practices. In addition, studies have found that teachers were overall positive towards PWPBS, but also revealed strategies were rated important rather than feasible. This indicates that early childhood settings need to consider the support necessary for achieving high fidelity in implementation (Frey et al., 2010).

Basic Assumptions

For this study, it is assumed that early childhood programs have a PBIS leadership team established to serve as a guide for the implementation process of PWPBIS within their program. The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (2024) describes this team focuses on the on – going monitoring of decisions, support, and outcomes for their program. Likewise, it can be assumed that the leadership team is using the Early Childhood Program – Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality (ECBoQ) to determine progress toward their implementation of PWPBIS. It can be assumed that for a program to be deemed as successfully implementing PWPBIS, all eight components of PWPBIS are not only implemented but also maintained with fidelity. It can also be assumed that all staff members are trained on the Pyramid Model, and at least 80% of the staff express their willingness to participate in program-wide implementation.

Basic Limitations

In every study, it is central to recognize the presence of limitations. In this case study, a potential constraint arises from the fact that the participating teachers may not have been employed at the school for the entire duration of the PBIS program implementation. Consequently, they might not possess full awareness of the implementation processes that occurred at the school, missed professional development trainings, or coaching sessions to improve upon their teaching practices. This can be acknowledged during the survey process when determining how long a teacher has been at the school. Additionally, another limitation could be a lack of transparency or misconceptions when teachers are completing the survey. The teachers who participate in the study may not give full disclosure of their true perceptions and opinions of PBIS or may not be able to explain and expand upon their responses, due to not having the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Lastly, another limitation is preschool programs will be limited to one area due to the lack of preschool programs that have conducted TPOT observations in their classrooms. COVID-19 has been a huge factor in high staff turnover which has hindered the program's ability to train staff, continue the implementation of PWPBIS, and conduct TPOT observations.

Summary

In summary, as the prevalence rate of challenging behavior in young children rises, there is a growing need to implement evidence – based practices that emphasize social-emotional competencies to prevent challenging behaviors. One of those evidence – based practices is Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS). PWPBIS is a three – tiered evidence – based framework that focuses on prevention and intervention practices, to promote social – emotional competencies, and increase academic growth. With the growing

number of early childhood settings implementing PWPBIS, there is a need to monitor the implementation of PWPBIS to ensure fidelity. One way to monitor PWPBIS fidelity is TPOT observations. However, there are limited studies evaluating TPOT and its use as a professional development tool to improve Pyramid Model practices and child outcomes.

The purpose of this case study is to explore how a teacher's perspective influences their capability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity. The case study investigated the professional development opportunities of PWPBIS and identifying potential barriers hindering teaching staff from effectively implementing PWPBIS within the early childhood setting. In the forthcoming chapters, the researcher presented literature encompassing the background, history, and effectiveness of PWPBIS, the Pyramid Model, and TPOT. This literature provides the foundation to conduct the case study, analyze findings, and explore future implications.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) research is becoming more prevalent and PBIS has evolved in the form of Program Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) for early childhood programs has become increasingly widespread. While PBIS is not a curriculum per se, it serves as a framework designed to assist teachers, parents, and administrators in enhancing social-emotional competencies and academic performance, ultimately aiming to reduce challenging behavior. This literature review looks into the historical development of PBIS, its connection to PWPBIS and Pyramid Model Practices, the significance of PBIS in the context of special education, and the tools and assessments utilized in its implementation. Additionally, the review explores the barriers associated with implementing PWPBIS and evaluate its overall effectiveness.

Research Question and Subquestions

1. How do the attitudes and perspectives of preschool teachers impact their capacity to implement Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) with fidelity within the classroom setting?
 - 1.1 What are the beliefs and opinions of preschool teachers towards Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?
 - 1.2 What beliefs do preschool teachers hold regarding sufficient training in Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to implement with fidelity within the classroom?

1.3 What are the barriers preventing preschool teachers from effectively implementing Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports practices and interventions?

1.4 How do you feel about the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) overall?

PBIS and Pyramid Model Practices

Students who exhibit challenging behaviors present one of the biggest obstacles for teachers in the classroom. These behaviors can stem from a multitude of factors, including environment, diagnosis, culture, academic challenges, and interactions with peers and teachers (Allday, 2017). Determining the function of these behaviors can be a lengthy and complex process, often leaving teachers unsure where to begin. Even when teachers seek professional help, support may be delayed due to heavy caseloads. Administrators are increasingly recognizing the importance of prevention and the need to support teachers in this area. To reduce challenging behaviors in the classroom, effective programs must be identified and properly implemented (Molloy et al., 2013). Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is one evidence-based framework that schools have adopted for this purpose.

In 2018, a total of 27,000 schools across the United States were actively implementing PBIS (Kim & Venet, 2023). Specifically, this initiative is linked to students with diagnosed disabilities and/or mental health conditions. In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) introduced amendments incorporating insights regarding student behavior hindering their learning. Sugai et al. (2000) reports the amendments outline the adoption of Positive Behavior Support strategies (PBS) and the performance of Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA). It's crucial to acknowledge these concepts are not novel in education. Nevertheless, the

amendments incorporated into IDEA now officially recognize these two practices as avenues to enhance the quality of behavioral interventions and support planning.

It is not new that PBIS is the framework that majority of schools are adopting and implementing to increase academic and social – emotional competencies. However, Dunlap and Fox (2015) explain PBIS is rooted within the evidence – base framework of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) which aims to improve school climate and discipline of behavior. PBS was developed to address challenging behavior for children who had a diagnosed disability to include positive behavior support and nonaversive behavior management. Afterwards, there was a major step taken when PBS was acknowledged as a framework that could prevent challenging behavior. This is when PBS was adapted to a multi–tiered system. Since 1997, following amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the commonly used term for PBS in schools has been PBIS. Both terms can be used synonymously but it is important to note that PBIS is derived from PBS.

According to Dunlap and Fox (2015), researchers developed a multi-tiered approach in 2003 for early childhood programs serving children from birth to age five, known as the Pyramid Model. In comparison to PBIS, the Pyramid Model was created from evidence-based practices derived from PBS and interventions that are effective on young children. Because of its multi-tiered framework and similarities to SWPBIS and the Pyramid Model, it has been referred to as Program-wide Positive Behavior Support (PWPBS). SWPBIS is used in schools K – 12 with an emphasis on all three tiers: universal, secondary, and tertiary. PWPBS is used in early childhood programs, private preschools, and in Head Start settings.

Dunlap and Fox (2015) note there are similarities between SWPBIS, PBIS, the Pyramid Model, and the application it has in early childhood settings. However, there are also stark

differences as well. SWPBIS is developed from the foundations of PBS and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and designed to improve academic, social, behavioral, and school moral outcomes on a continuum of practices from the three tiers: universal, secondary, and tertiary. It is characterized by eight elements: established leadership team, ongoing monitoring of data and implementation of fidelity, data-driven decisions, professional development, monitoring and response of behavioral expectations, system in place for challenging behaviors, family engagement, and instruction of social skills.

Whereas the Pyramid Model is based on effective instruction for young children and designed to promote social – emotional competences, prevent challenging behavior, and implement behavior support plans for children who exhibit challenging behavior. Like SWPBIS it also is a continuum of evidence – based practices of prevention, promotion, and intervention. Specifically, the Pyramid Model is an example of PWPBIS. The difference explained by Dunlap and Fox (2015) is the Pyramid Model is particularly created to cater to the needs of early childhood programs. There are six elements of the Pyramid Model which include: developmental stages of children, family engagement, role of the office, acknowledgement systems, teaching practices, and data driven decision making.

The initial element highlighted by Dunlap and Fox (2015) is centered on the developmental stages of children, emphasizes the enhancement of children's learning and engagement. This is achieved by emphasizing teaching practices and expectations specifically tailored to primary and secondary school settings. It is crucial that children receive instruction and expectations that align with their developmental stage to ensure optimal learning outcomes. This pertains to children's capacity for self-regulation, utilization of expressive and receptive

language, growth in independence, and the formation of nurturing and meaningful relationships with both adults and peers.

In the Pyramid Model and SWPBIS, placing family engagement at the forefront of school practices and policies is crucial according to Dunlap and Fox (2015), particularly in early childhood programs where parents play a primary role in education. Key components encompass two-way communication, collaborative learning objectives for children both at school and home, resources, and the strengthening of the parent-child relationship. In addition to developmental stages and family engagement, the third element pertains to the role of the office. Different from disciplinary measures in other school settings, early childhood programs do not involve sending children to the office. Consequently, role of the office focuses on administration, classroom support, training, and the implementation of evidence-based practices. Instances of challenging behavior are documented through behavior incident referrals, contributing to data collection for the implementation of intervention supports.

The fourth component, acknowledgement systems, ensures that students adhere to program-wide expectations by providing positive and descriptive feedback immediately following appropriate behavior. Teachers are urged to use enthusiasm, aiding children in understanding that positive behavior results in positive attention. This stands in contrast to SWPBIS, where a token economy system is utilized to reward students for demonstrating appropriate behavior.

Running in conjunction with acknowledgment systems, the fifth element is teaching practices. The Pyramid Model has developed teaching practices that align with all tiers, fostering social-emotional development and mitigating challenging behaviors. These practices focus on instructional routines designed to teach emotional regulation, establish peer relationships, and

problem-solving skills. Targeted instruction incorporates these skills in the classroom, with an emphasis on involving families to implement these practices in the home setting.

Lastly, Dunlap and Fox (2015) state data decision-making tools is a core element of positive behavior support to drive intervention decisions. This is true for SWPBIS and PWPBIS. The emphasis within this element is to ensure the decisions match the population within the appropriate context. Specifically, PWPBIS uses data to identify strengths, track the implementation of PWPBIS, determine additional needs for children, staff, and program implementation.

Overall, the Pyramid Model is an example of PWPBS and shares close alignment with SWPBS. It is imperative to recognize that PBS and PBIS can be used interchangeably, given their identical features and shared conceptual foundations. The primary distinction lies in the age group they serve. Both frameworks serve as systems of support aimed at addressing social-emotional competencies and reducing challenging behavior.

PBIS and Special Education

While PBIS is focused on positive outcomes for all students, it particularly has added benefits for students who have a diagnosed disability. Multiple national education centers are urging schools to go back to basic approaches and working smarter, not harder (Clemens et al., 2021). In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was established to encourage schools to improve school-wide outcomes, incorporating both academic and behavioral aspects, and to offer a continuum of intervention services for students. This continuum of intervention services is commonly referred to as Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), allowing schools to efficiently organize and streamline intervention services to enhance overall outcomes for students (Bohanon et al., 2021). While laws like ESSA and IDEA focus on inclusive practices

for students who receive special education services, PBIS is an added benefit to them. In 2019, U. S. Department of Education found students who have a disability spend 80% or more in a general education setting. The implementation of PBIS enables schools to create a safe, positive, welcoming learning environment to allow students to attend and engage to tasks (Bradshaw et al., 2021). In addition to attending and engaging, other benefits include preventive interventions, positive school climate, and providing intensive support when needed (Burke et al., 2015).

Typically, students with disabilities face a greater likelihood of experiencing exclusionary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, in comparison to their peers without disabilities. Those subjected to these practices are at an elevated risk of experiencing negative outcomes both in school and later in life. Simonsen et al. (2021) refer to this phenomenon as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Students who have a diagnosed disability are required to have more individualized supports and instruction. To support these students with a strong foundation of classroom support and inclusive practices, multi-tiered systems of support frameworks are utilized, such as PBIS, have proven effective in implementing and monitoring academic, social, and behavioral supports and needs. As of now, there hasn't been a comprehensive nationwide assessment of the connection between implementing Tier 1 PBIS and the outcomes for students with disabilities in the United States. Over 20,000 schools in the United States utilize a PBIS online data management system endorsed by the Center on PBIS, to record PBIS fidelity and outcome data. However, there has been inconsistency among school staff in documenting data related to students' disabilities within this system. Fortunately, the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) compiles information on the outcomes experienced by students with disabilities in reported years across all U.S. schools. Sadly, Simonsen et al. (2021) recognized difficulties associated with underreporting exclusionary discipline outcomes in the CRDC dataset. In 2015,

the U.S. Government of Accountability Office reviewed CRDC data and concluded the data is not an accurate representation of restraint and seclusion within schools. The data review showed 70% of schools reported zero incidents. This raised similar concerns of underreporting occurring in students with disabilities with explosion, suspension, restraints, and other disciplinary practices.

Similarly, Zeng et al. (2020) claims suspension and expulsion frequently occur in early childhood programs, with children being 3.2 times more prone to expulsion in comparison to students in grades K – 12. The repercussions of suspension and expulsion extend beyond academic consequences, impacting both children and their families by depriving students of educational opportunities, particularly in the case of preschool students. Early childhood programs play a crucial role in a child's development at a young age, focusing on foundational skills that serve as building blocks for their lifelong learning journey. In a particular study, it was discovered that the expulsion rate in state-funded preschool programs stood at 6.7 per 1,000 children, with over 10% of preschool teachers reporting the expulsion of at least one child. Furthermore, in 2015, Zeng et al. (2020) collected data from parents regarding suspension and expulsion revealed that an estimated 174,309 preschoolers experienced suspension, while 17,248 were expelled. This translated to a weekly average of at least 4,842 preschool students facing suspension or expulsion from state-funded programs in the United States. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) has been recognized as an efficient framework for addressing a school's environment, meeting students' needs, and enhancing overall systems and procedures, including disciplines and referrals.

Assessment Tools for Fidelity

A growing body of literature has emerged on the importance of implementation quality. High-quality implementation is crucial because programs that are well-executed are more likely to produce the desired effects (Allday, 2017). Several data-based assessment tools have been developed to systematically measure the Pyramid Model and its implementation quality. Specifically, four tools have been created to evaluate the implementation of the Pyramid Model in early childhood settings: Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmark of Quality (ECBoQ), Preschool-Wide Evaluation Tool (PreSET), Inventory of Practices for Promoting Social Competence (PPSEC), and Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT). These tools were designed to address the unique requirements of assessing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) in early childhood settings (Steed & Webb, 2012).

The ECBoQ serves as a self-assessment tool for leadership teams to evaluate the status of Pyramid Model implementation within their early childhood programs. PreSET assesses the universal features of PBIS implementation in early childhood programs (Vatland et al., 2022). PPSEC is a self-assessment tool used by teachers to identify practices that are already in place or need improvement. Lastly, TPOT assesses all levels of PWPBIS. Notably, PreSET and TPOT are the only assessment tools completed by an external evaluator, incorporating a combination of classroom observations and teacher interviews (Steed & Webb, 2012).

Moreover, while TPOT, PPSEC, and ECBoQ address certain measurement needs for key practices in PWPBIS, there are three crucial aspects they collectively overlook. Firstly, TPOT and PPSEC fail to gather data on program-wide attributes crucial for the sustainability and adoption of PBIS. These attributes include professional development opportunities, teacher planning time, and data collection for program and student decision-making. Secondly, both

PPSEC and ECBoQ, being self-assessment tools, lack the involvement of an outside evaluator. Lastly, all three tools employ a divergent scoring system, unlike PreSET. In contrast, PreSET utilizes the same scoring system and rubric employed by district and state-level administrators to monitor the effectiveness of PBIS on a school-wide scale (Steed & Webb, 2012).

Fox et al. (2017) and Wennerstrom et al. (2021) explains the ECBoQ tool serves as a valuable resource for leadership teams aiming to evaluate the implementation of the Pyramid Model. It allows teams to examine the necessary elements and offers benchmarks essential for achieving them. This tool is instrumental in gauging the progress of Pyramid Model practices.

Within the ECBoQ, leadership teams assess seven critical elements. These elements encompass establishing a leadership team, securing staff buy-in, fostering family engagement, setting program-wide expectations, developing a professional development and staff support plan, establishing procedures to address challenging behavior, and monitoring implementation and outcomes. Each element contains specific quality benchmarks that can be scored. In total, there are forty-one benchmarks for leadership teams to evaluate. During the assessment, the team determines whether each benchmark is not in place (0), partially in place (1), or fully in place (2) (Fox et al., 2017; Wennerstrom et al. (2021)). To maintain a proactive approach, the leadership team is advised to convene regularly every two to three months for a comprehensive review of the ECBoQ. This periodic assessment allows them to gain insights into their implementation status and address any elements or benchmarks that require additional planning.

Additionally, the PreSET is a modification of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), a tool utilized by schools implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS). It was created to fulfill the requirement for a data-driven tool specifically tailored for early childhood programs to assess both program and classroom components of

PWPBIS. Steed and Webb (2012) reports the PreSET employs an adjusted three-point Likert scale (0- not implemented, 1- partially implemented, 2- fully implemented) and calculates subscale points along with total scores. The PreSET comprises 30 items arranged into eight face-valid subscales, aligning with eight aspects of PW-PBIS at the universal tier of intervention. The items and subscales have been predominantly adopted from those utilized in the SET. While the PreSET is derived from the SET, it retained some of the original subscales, introduced new ones, and made adjustments to the wording to align with the context of PWPBIS. Notably, it maintained the teaching of behavior expectations but incorporated family involvement, recognizing its crucial role in early childhood settings.

Likewise, the PreSET measures program-wide supports linked to the long-term implementation of PWPBIS. This incorporates tasks such as collecting and monitoring data on child and program variables, forming a leadership team, and offering administrative support for teachers. Table 6.1 by Steed and Webb (2012) offers a summary of the PW-PBIS features covered across the eight PreSET subscales. The PreSET includes assessments of teacher-child interactions and classroom materials to gauge PWPBIS, alongside interviews with program administrators, teachers, and children. The entire process takes approximately an hour, and it is recommended to conduct it twice a school year, ideally in the fall and spring by an evaluator who has training in early childhood, had completed the reliability training, and has obtain at least an 80% interobserver reliability prior to being an evaluator.

Table 6.1*Features of PBIS & eight subscales of PreSET*

Feature of PBIS	PreSET subscale
The presence of 3 to 5 simply stated behavioral expectations for all teachers and children to follow that are posted in each classroom with words and visual depictions of the rules	A: Expectations Defined
Active teaching of behavioral expectations in large and small groups and incidentally so that all teachers and children can state the rules and regularly follow them	B: Expectations Taught
Consistent teacher responses to children's appropriate social behavior and challenging behavior	C: Responses to Appropriate and Challenging Behavior
An organized and predictable classroom environment to prevent children's challenging behavior	D: Organized and Predictable Behavior
Documentation of children's challenging behavior and a system for regularly reviewing those data and using them in decision making	E: Monitoring and Decision Making
Regular communication between teachers and parents and parent involvement in PBIS efforts	F: Family Involvement
A PBIS team that evaluates child data and creates and follows an action plan to implement PBIS program wide	G: Management
Administrator support in the form of time, resources, and professional development related to PBIS for all program teachers and related personnel	H: Program Support
<i>Note.</i> PreSET = Preschool-Wide Evaluation Tool; PBIS = positive behavior interventions and support.	

Note. Table 6.1 Features of PBIS and eight subscales of PreSET. Steed, E. A., & Webb, M. (2012). The psychometric properties of the Preschool-Wide Evaluation Tool (PRESET). *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 15(4), 231–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300712459357>

Similarly, the PPSEC, created by CSEFEL (n.d), serves as a tool for teams or individuals to identify training needs and create action plans in four key areas: building positive relationships, supportive environments, social-emotional teaching strategies, and implementing individualized intensive interventions. The goal is to promote individual self-reflection and encourage collaborative efforts with teachers, coaches, and administrative staff to ensure the

adoption of effective practices. The tool is structured into two sections: the Inventory of Practices and the Action Plan.

The first section, the Inventory, promotes discussion and reflection across the four key areas. Each area encompasses Skills and Indicators reflective practices that enhance social-emotional competencies in children, totaling twenty-eight Skills and Indicators. Within the Inventory, CSEFEL (n.d.) noted there is a section titled Evidence/Observation, facilitating the recording of observations, strengths, suggestions, and areas needing improvement concerning the Skills or Indicators. Furthermore, the Inventory includes a column featuring three skill levels: Seldom, Occasionally, and Consistently. This structure allows individuals or teams to reflect on the implementation of the Skill or Indicator and assess its effectiveness. Following this, there is a Target for Training indicator, enabling the team or individual to identify the need for training or not.

The subsequent part, the Action Plan, follows the identification of specific training needs linked to Skill or Indicator practices. Once these Skills or Indicators are recognized, a collaborative effort should result to determine strategies aimed at improving existing practices or introducing new teaching practices. Ultimately, the Action Plan section also incorporates a Resources and Supports column, allowing the identification of any essential Resources or Support required for the effective implementation of existing teaching practices or the introduction of new ones. CSEFEL (n.d.) recommends to complete the PPSEC at various intervals to monitor progress in training identification, using different ink colors to visualize changes over time.

Nonetheless, Hemmeter et al. (2017) created TPOT to measure the fidelity of practices related to the Pyramid Model, specifically focusing on environmental, interaction, and

instructional practices. TPOT was developed and part of an innovation funded by the Institute of Education Sciences to measure the fidelity of Pyramid Model teaching practices implemented within the early childhood setting before and after professional development trainings.

Hemmeter et al. (2017) explains TPOT focuses on the implementation of teaching practices within the classroom at the universal, targeted, and individualized practices. It is broken into three subscales key teaching practices, red flags, and strategies for responding to challenging behavior. There are a total of fourteen items under key teaching practices, seventeen items for red flags, and three items for strategies for responding to challenging behavior. Under each subscale there are observable teaching practice indicators that vary from five to ten within each teaching practice for a total of 114 key teaching practices. It is a two-hour observation observing teacher and child directed activities and transitions, followed by an interview. There are eight teaching practices that are only scored on observation, three practices scored on observation and interview, and three practices scored on interview only.

According to Hemmeter et al. (2017), the goal for programs to use TPOT is to identify teaching practices to provide professional developmental trainings for teachers, provide guidance around curriculum and lesson planning, and to identify professional development strategies for support. It can also be used to determine which teachers may benefit from intensive support such as practice – based coaching. Additionally, TPOT data can be used to assess the implementation of Pyramid Model practices program – wide or within each tier and can be used to assess MTSS implementation for social, emotional, and behavioral teaching practices. TPOT is a valuable assessment tool early childhood programs can utilize to assess the implementation of Pyramid Model teaching practices. Data collected from TPOT can be used to make data driven decisions such as individualized support for teachers or provide professional development in specific areas

of key teaching practices. Overall, it is used to measure classroom quality and can be used in early childhood settings to strengthen the implementation of the Pyramid Model.

As a result, the assessment tools, including ECBoQ, PreSET, PSSEC, and TPOT, have been developed or modified to evaluate the implementation of PWPBIS in early childhood settings. These tools share commonalities in terms of specific indicators and teaching practices, yet they also possess distinctive features, such as being a self-assessment tool or an observation conducted by an evaluator. In summary, these assessment tools collectively aim to identify professional development opportunities to enhance teaching practices focused on fostering social-emotional competencies in children within the early childhood setting.

Barriers to Implementation

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a positive disciplinary framework implemented in schools and early childhood programs. The benefits noted by Tyre and Feuerbron (2021) of adopting this framework are evident for students, staff, families, and schools, contributing to improved academic outcomes, a positive school climate, enhanced staff morale, and a reduction in challenging behaviors, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions.

Despite these advantages, schools and early childhood programs encounter challenges in PBIS implementation, and one significant obstacle is obtaining staff buy-in. Staff buy-in is crucial for successful implementation, as the willingness and belief of staff members in the effectiveness of PBIS directly influences its adoption. PBIS practices are dependent on teacher's implementation of them within the classroom. Therefore, staff buy-in and support is an essential component to reaching maximum implementation (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Resistance to PBIS often stems from staff perceptions, leading to potential negative consequences such as poor student outcomes, low fidelity rates, and diminished collaboration among staff.

Tyre and Feuerborn (2012) recognized the importance of staff buy-in, it is essential to address potential resistance early on. Studies have shown that overlooking this critical step due to eagerness to implement PBIS can hinder the overall success of the framework. To mitigate this, leadership teams should invest time in engaging staff, providing relevant data, and dispelling misconceptions. This proactive approach can prevent resistance, ensuring a smoother PBIS implementation process and fostering a positive school environment.

Another obstacle cited by Steed et al. (2013) arises in early childhood programs situated in rural areas. Geographical location becomes a challenge, hindering effective intervention. The distance can impede access to specialized behavior interventionists needed to support children with diagnosed disabilities or challenging behaviors. Moreover, rural programs face difficulties in recruiting qualified staff capable of delivering effective early childhood education and special education services. This challenge is compounded by lower compensation rates, impacting the retention of qualified staff. These factors collectively present a hurdle in implementing PBIS within rural areas, as PBIS relies on consistency. A high staff turnover becomes a barrier to the successful implementation of PBIS in such settings. There is also a concern of lack of sustainability with stakeholders, administration, and staff. Studies have been conducted to determine the sustainability within school districts. One study found school districts are likely to discontinue implementation within three years and abandonment was more prevalent in urban schools than rural schools. This is a concerning conclusion because PBIS has the capability to improve overall student outcomes and administrators have been adopting practices that are proven to not be valid (Chitiyo et al., 2019).

In addition to staff buy-in and geographical locations, teacher perceptions can impede the successful implementation of PBIS. Tyre and Feuerborn (2021) identified three common misses

that act as barriers to PBIS implementation. These misses include misconceptions, misapplications, and misalignments with educational philosophy. Teaching staff may lack a comprehensive understanding of PBIS, focusing only on a few aspects of the overall framework. Their comprehension might be anchored to a limited set of observable practices rather than the broader context. For instance, some teachers may view rewarding students or display behavior expectations in various settings, as insufficient. Despite years of implementation, there may still be staff unfamiliar with PBIS due to their own lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of the framework, leading to these conceptualized misconceptions.

To add, another miss explained by Tyre and Feuerborn (2021) is related to misapplication. Misapplications arise when staff express concerns about PBIS practices being applied incorrectly, incompletely, or with low fidelity. A limited understanding can result in the inaccurate implementation of the framework. For instance, teachers might perceive PBIS implementation as a restriction on sending students to the office, whereas the actual focus of PBIS is to reduce office discipline referrals. When misapplications take place, there is a valid concern regarding the accuracy or completeness of the implementation of the PBIS framework. Likewise, the third miss involves misalignment. Misalignments arise when there is a conflict between a teacher's belief system and the practices of PBIS. It is crucial to acknowledge that philosophical conflicts are commonplace within schools. Identifying misalignments are essential as they can impede the implementation process. Teachers are more inclined to adopt a framework closely aligned with their own philosophy.

Ultimately, obstacles described by Tyre & Feuerborn (2021) can impede the effective implementation of PBIS, given the substantial reliance on teaching practices. Full comprehension of the framework is crucial for successful implementation. While common

misconceptions may pose challenges, proactive steps, such as staff engagement, targeted professional development, understanding teacher perceptions, and providing implementation support, can prevent these barriers when they arise.

Summary

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is rooted in Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) and the Pyramid Model, with tailored systems for different age groups: SWPBIS for K-12 settings and PWPBIS for early childhood (Frey et al., 2010). PBIS plays a crucial role in Special Education, aligning with ESSA and IDEA to ensure students with disabilities receive preventive interventions, experience a positive school climate, and access intensive interventions when needed, particularly to reduce suspension and expulsion rates in early childhood programs (Burke et al., 2015; Zeng et al., 2020). There are several assessment tools measure the fidelity of the Pyramid Model, including ECBoQ, PreSET, PPSEC, and TPOT, all aimed at identifying professional development opportunities to enhance teaching practices. While PBIS is a robust framework, it has limitations, including barriers such as staff buy-in, geographical location, and misapplication.

Given the limited research on PWPBIS in early childhood settings, there is a need to investigate how teachers' attitudes affect their ability to implement PWPBIS. This case study aimed to identify potential barriers, proactive steps, targeted professional development, and understand teachers' perceptions to strengthen the implementation of PWPBIS. The following chapter will outline the research methodology, participants, research design, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Restatement of Purpose

While Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and the Pyramid Model have been longstanding approaches, TPOT is a more recent development. Currently, over 26,000 schools in the United States have adopted SWPBIS, with the goal of implementing school-wide systems and procedures that focus on social-emotional skills (Nelen et al., 2021). Limited research has been conducted on TPOT's effectiveness as a professional development tool in preschool settings. The existing studies also show a scarcity of investigation into teachers' understanding of PBIS and their competence in implementing Pyramid Model Interventions. Therefore, there is a necessity to explore how teachers' perspectives impact their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity.

Research Question and Subquestions

1. How do the attitudes and perspectives of preschool teachers impact their capacity to implement Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with fidelity within the classroom setting?

1.1 What are the beliefs and opinions of preschool teachers towards Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?

1.2 What beliefs do preschool teachers hold regarding sufficient training in Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to implement with fidelity within the classroom?

1.3 What are the barriers preventing preschool teachers from effectively implementing

Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports practices and interventions?

1.4 How do you feel about the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) overall?

Description of Participants

The initial challenge was identifying participants for the case study. First, it was a challenge to identify preschool programs that implemented PWPBIS and an instrument tool to measure the implementation of the practices PWPBIS (Hemmeter, 2017). In addition to identifying preschool programs that utilize PWPBIS and TPOT, programs also had to use an assessment tool to determine their progress with the implementation of PWPBIS. There are four tools that have been created to evaluate the Pyramid Model in preschool settings: Early Childhood Program – Wide PBS Benchmark Quality (ECBoQ), Preschool-wide Evaluation Tool (PreSET), Inventory of Practices for Promoting Social Competence (PPSEC), and Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) (Vatland et al., 2022; Steed & Webb, 2012).

The case study participants were preschool teachers in Head Start Programs and Pre–K Counts Programs. Teachers will vary in years of experience, gender, and educational background as requirements are different in each program. Due to COVID – 19, there has been a workforce crisis in Head Start and Pre – K counts programs to retain staff. There has been a notable challenge in keeping qualified staff due to compensation, challenging job conditions, and jobs offering better pay (National Head Start Association, 2023). Therefore, there are a limited number of Head Start and Pre – K counts programs who have current TPOT data. For the purpose of this study, existing and current TPOT data will be utilized. This study used Head Start and Pre – K Counts programs within the Western Pennsylvania region who have been implementing PWPBIS for at least two full years. After an extensive amount of research to

identify early childhood programs who have implemented PWPBIS for at least two years, have a well – established leadership team, and use an assessment tool to assess the implementation process and practices within the classroom, there was only one early childhood program who identified meeting all the requirements. The program has twenty–nine combined Head Start and Pre–K counts classrooms. The case study had a small sample of participants in the study due to staff turnover. Only staff who have had a TPOT observation conducted were eligible to participate in the study.

Research Design and Description Procedures

The research utilized a case study design, adopting a retrospective approach through in-depth interviews that explore participants' past experiences with Program-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) and the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT). The case study design allows to focus intensely on representative of a larger population of cases narrowing it down to a single case (Elman et al., 2016).

A case study design enables an intensive, in-depth examination that incorporates multiple variables, allowing for thorough documentation, description, and analysis of the data. Focused on individuals, groups, or multiple participants, case studies emphasize “how” and “why” questions (Sandall et al., 2002). This study employed multiple data sources, using a qualitative approach to capture the participant's experience in depth. Since 1989, qualitative research has gained prominence in early childhood special education, adopting a multimethod, interpretive, and naturalistic approach (Krusenik & Halmstad University, 2015). This approach allows participants to remain in their natural settings, with results interpreted through the meanings they ascribe to their experiences, deepening and broadening understanding. Key features of qualitative research include the use of multiple methods and the repetitive nature of analysis,

which allows researchers to revisit data repeatedly and identify recurring themes (Sandall et al., 2002). For this study, interviews on past experiences and previously collected TPOT observation data were the primary methods. This repetitive analysis allowed researchers to explore whether preschool teachers' attitudes and perspectives influence their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity in the classroom. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants with relevant experience in the Head Start/Pre-K setting and with TPOT and PWPBIS, ensuring a comprehensive perspective (Schwartz et al., 1998). Ultimately, the goal of this retrospective case study was to uncover causal relationships or patterns emerging from prior experiences, enhancing understanding of the interaction between a specific context and a phenomenon and providing a holistic view (Krusenvik & Halmstad University, 2015). Conclusively, this approach proved valuable in addressing the research questions, offering insights into how teachers' attitudes and perspectives may impact their fidelity in implementing PWPBIS in early childhood classrooms.

Data was collected via in-depth interviews that directly address the study's research questions. The researcher contacted all administrators of Head Start and Pre-K Counts programs in Western Pennsylvania to identify programs that have been implementing PWPBIS for at least two years, have a well-established leadership team, and use assessment tools that evaluate both PWPBIS implementation status and classroom practices (Appendix B)

Once programs are identified, the researcher requested permission to access all TPOT data from the 2018–2019 to the 2022–2023 school years. Additionally, permission was sought to invite teachers to voluntarily participate in the study (Appendix C). Upon receiving approval, the researcher obtained contact information for the teachers and reached out to them for consent (Appendix D). Only teachers who received a TPOT observation during the specified school years

will be contacted. After approval was granted (Appendix E), an email was sent to the teachers, inviting them to participate in the study and including the consent forms. The consent form asked for permission to discuss the program's aggregated TPOT data, individual TPOT data, and to conduct multiple interviews if necessary (Appendix D). It was strongly emphasized that all collected data will remain anonymous to protect the confidentiality of both the program and staff. The researcher also offered to share the study's results with the program if desired.

After participants gave their consent, the researcher reached out to schedule interviews. Data collection occurred during these interviews that covered topics such as PWPBIS training, the TPOT observation tool, the program's aggregated TPOT data, and participants' personal experiences. Each interview focused on five key questions, addressing the main research question and sub questions, with the researcher introducing each question to direct the conversation. Additional prompts were used as needed to help guide the participant in answering fully. See Appendix A for questions and prompts used throughout the interviews. This allowed key themes to naturally emerge as participants reflect on their past experiences. As participants shared their insights, the research questions are expected to be addressed organically. The goal was to explore these questions through open-ended discussions that allow for valuable insights to surface. Ultimately, this approach aimed to provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives, enriching the study's findings and offering meaningful implications for future research.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this retrospective case study was to explore past events to identify themes, patterns, and barriers that emerge from participant interviews. Once the interviews were completed, the data was collected and aggregated for analysis. Aggregating the data involved

comparing and linking participants' responses to identify recurring patterns and themes. This process included several phases: first, describing the data by identifying the who, what, when, where, and why of the situation; second, interpreting the data by uncovering themes, patterns, and emerging categories; and finally, drawing conclusions and determining the significance of these themes (Schoch, 2020). By examining these past experiences, the study aimed to reveal key factors that influence the implementation of PWPBIS in the classroom. The findings provided critical insights into how participants' experiences and challenges affect PWPBIS implementation, while also identifying potential areas for improvement in professional development and teaching practices within early childhood programs.

Through comprehensive data analysis, this study sought to offer early childhood programs a proactive guide for planning and training teachers in PWPBIS, ensuring fidelity in its implementation. The intent was to provide programs with valuable insights into training methods and potential barriers, enabling administrators to refine their plans for successful PWPBIS implementation. This will support leadership teams, professional development efforts, and classroom practices by offering a detailed understanding of the factors that influence implementation fidelity. Ultimately, the study aimed to equip early childhood programs with data and information that can enhance their PWPBIS practices, driving continuous improvement and strengthening the overall effectiveness of their approach.

Following the completion of data collection, which includes existing TPOT data and in-depth interviews, the final phase of the study focused on data analysis. This stage involved identifying common themes, trends, successes, and barriers that emerge from the interviews. The goal was to examine whether teachers' attitudes and perspectives impact their ability to

implement Program-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) with fidelity in the classroom.

The final step in data analysis was to summarize the findings, highlight emerging themes, and to summarize the themes, with the goal of addressing the research questions and sub-questions. As previously mentioned, aggregating the data involved analyzing participants' responses to identify recurring patterns and themes. This process included several phases: describing the data, interpreting it to identify themes, patterns, and emerging categories, drawing conclusions, and assessing the significance of the identified themes (Schoch, 2020). Through open-ended questions (Appendix A) the study gathered demographic information alongside insights into the perspectives and barriers related to PWPBIS implementation. Addressing common themes, barriers, trends, and successes will enable a deeper understanding, prompting programs to evaluate their current practices and enhance classroom strategies for greater effectiveness.

In essence, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify prevalent themes and barriers of teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of PWPBIS in their classrooms, alongside pivotal contributing factors concerning implementation, training, and professional development. The analysis involved reviewing the data thoroughly to identify recurring patterns and broad themes, assessing their significance in relation to the findings (Sandall et al., 2002; Schoch, 2020). These findings will inform early childhood programs with key areas where they should prioritize in their PWPBIS implementation to ensure sustained effectiveness and successful execution. This aligns with the study's objective of aiding early childhood programs in implementing PWPBIS, aiming for an 80% fidelity rate. Furthermore, the results may spur further investigation, potentially broadening the scope to include more programs and

participants, while utilizing current TPOT data to determine whether similar themes persist or if new insights emerged. The upcoming chapter explores data collection, examining both qualitative and quantitative data, common themes, barriers, and overall summary findings to gain deeper insights into teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward PWPBIS implementation.

Chapter 4

Findings**Restatement of Research Questions**

The purpose of this case study was to explore how teachers' perspectives influence their ability to implement Program-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) with fidelity. This study investigates the impact of preschool teachers' attitudes and viewpoints on their effectiveness in applying PWPBIS. Additionally, it sought to examine preschool teachers' beliefs about PBIS, evaluate the adequacy of their training, and identify any potential gaps in their knowledge or practice. To achieve this, the following research questions were presented.

1. How do the attitudes and perspectives of preschool teachers impact their capacity to implement Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) with fidelity within the classroom setting?
 - 1.1 What are the beliefs and opinions of preschool teachers towards Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?
 - 1.2 What beliefs do preschool teachers hold regarding sufficient training in Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to implement with fidelity within the classroom?
 - 1.3 What are the barriers preventing preschool teachers from effectively implementing Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports practices and interventions?
 - 1.4 How do you feel about the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) overall?

The interview results focused on gathering qualitative data. The participant engaged in several in-depth interviews that included open-ended questions. These questions were based on the primary and sub-research questions, with follow-up questions emerging naturally as the conversation progressed to gather additional insights. The responses were analyzed to identify themes, trends, insights, and key factors that either supported or hindered the effective implementation of PWPBIS with fidelity in the classroom.

Demographics

There were few early childhood programs that met the case study's criteria. These requirements included actively implementing PWPBIS and using an assessment tool to measure the fidelity of PWPBIS practices. In addition to identifying programs that utilized both PWPBIS and the TPOT, eligible programs also had to use an evaluation tool to track their progress in implementing PWPBIS. Among the programs contacted, only one early childhood program—a Head Start and Pre-K Counts program—met all the criteria and agreed to participate in the study. This program, Mercer County Head Start is located in western Pennsylvania.

In addition to the challenges of identifying a suitable program, there were difficulties in recruiting participants for the study. Initially, the program identified ten eligible participants. However, due to limited responses and concerns about sensitive information, the study was redirected, shifting to a retrospective single case study with one participant who had previously worked at the program.

The participant, a white female, worked at the program for seven years and had multiple TPOT observations. She implemented PWPBIS in her classroom within her time at the early childhood program. Her educational background includes a bachelor's degree in elementary education and early childhood, as well as a master's degree in curriculum and instruction.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to explore how preschool teachers' perspectives influence their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity in the classroom. To collect data for this case study, an email was initially sent inviting participants to join the study. However, due to limited responses as previously mentioned, the study shifted to a single case study with a former employee of the program. After contacting the previous employee, an email was sent, including an informed consent form outlining the details of the case study. The participant was asked to consent to any or all of the following: discussing the program's TPOT data, discussing their individual TPOT data, and participating in multiple interviews if necessary. The participant consented to all three.

Following the received consent, an interview was scheduled. The participant was interviewed multiple times virtually, allowing discussions around the research and sub-questions to naturally develop during the conversations. A total of three interviews were conducted on October 21st, October 23rd, and October 26th. The researcher and participant also reviewed both the overall TPOT data for the program from 2020-2021 and the participant's individual TPOT data from the same period. This process facilitated deeper discussions and enabled the collection of additional qualitative data. As a result, the interviews provided valuable insights that contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' perspectives towards PBIS and TPOT.

Qualitative Data Findings

The qualitative data was analyzed to understand how the participants experiences and challenges impacted PWPBIS implementation, while identifying themes, barriers, potential improvements for future professional development and teaching practices. During the interviews,

the participant's responses addressed multiple questions within a single answer, while also providing additional information related to previous questions as the sub questions guided the conversation. As the discussion progressed, the following findings emerged.

Research Question 1 Findings

Research question 1 explored overall perspectives and attitudes towards PWPBIS and how these perspectives influenced its implementation in the classroom. The participant initially spoke broadly about the topic, and the researcher and participant gradually narrowed the focus to their specific beliefs and perspectives. The participant highlighted two key factors: personal experience and shared experiences with colleagues. They emphasized the importance of "buy-in" as a critical element for implementing PWPBIS with fidelity, stating, "As teachers buy into PWPBIS, I personally, believe in its foundation and goals, which led me to have a positive attitude and fully implement it in my classroom. This has helped me with my classroom environment, classroom management, and challenging behaviors." This belief aligned with the participant's overall TPOT score of 81%, confirming that they were implementing PWPBIS with fidelity. As previously discussed, staff buy-in is an indicator to successful implementation of PBIS (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). In this participants case, they bought into PWPBIS and successfully implemented it within their classroom. As mentioned previously, a classroom must score 80% or higher on their overall TPOT score to be considered as implementing PWPBIS with fidelity, and in this case, the participant exceeded that threshold with a score of 81% (Hemmeter et al., 2017).

Another key topic the participant discussed was the level of support felt by teachers and the support they personally received. The conversation revealed that implementing PWPBIS was not solely the teacher's responsibility, but rather a collective effort. The participant explained,

“It’s not just my responsibility to implement PWPBIS in my classroom, but also my assistants', the families', my supervisor’s, and the administration’s. When my supervisor visited my classroom, she would model PWPBIS language and reinforce what I was implementing, which made me feel supported and gave me confidence in effectively implementing PWPBIS. It reassured me that I was doing a good job.”

In contrast, the participant recalled colleagues who felt unsupported and unsure of how to implement PWPBIS, leading them to only do the bare minimum. This highlights the importance of staff buy-in, which is closely tied to the support teachers receive—not only from their own efforts, but also from families and administration. The participant’s reflection on their colleagues' struggles revealed lack of support yields ineffective PWPBIS implementation. Due to a lack of support, this also points to misapplications that had been identified earlier as barriers to successful implementation (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). Although this was not the participant’s personal experience, it highlights how crucial staff buy-in is, as it fosters the support needed to fully understand and implement PBIS with fidelity.

Lastly, the participant shared their personal beliefs about PBIS as a whole, stating, “PWPBIS has many components and requires a lot of time, energy, and effort to ensure it is done correctly. Without fully understanding PWPBIS in its entirety, I don’t know if I would have been able to implement it successfully in my classroom. There’s so much to remember, but with practice, it becomes a habit.” The participant’s response highlighted the importance of professional development and training. They emphasized that without proper training, it would be difficult for teachers to fully grasp and implement PWPBIS effectively—a point also made earlier when discussing colleagues who implemented PWPBIS with only the bare minimum. Additionally, this emphasizes the complexity of PWPBIS, as there are many components for

teachers to learn and apply. For instance, the TPOT alone assesses 114 indicators, illustrating the vast number of elements involved and supporting the participant's perspective. Overall, the participant's reflections reinforce the need for thorough training and support to ensure PWPBIS can be implemented with fidelity, as understanding its full scope is essential to its success in the classroom.

Finally, the participant emphasized the importance of professional development, stressing that breaking down each component of PWPBIS and pacing the training is critical which connects to the complexity of PWPBIS. This approach allows teachers to focus on one element at a time, increasing the likelihood of successful implementation. In conclusion, the findings highlight the intricate relationship between teacher attitudes, support systems, and professional development in ensuring the successful implementation of PWPBIS.

Moreover, the conversation reinforced the previously identified barrier of staff buy-in, highlighting how essential it is for successful implementation. The willingness and belief of staff in PWPBIS's effectiveness directly impact its adoption. The successful implementation of PWPBIS practices depends on not only the teachers but also assistants, families, and administration. Another barrier that emerged was the complexity of PBIS itself. With so many components to learn and apply, it can be challenging for teachers to implement it fully without adequate practice and effort.

In summary, several themes, barriers, and professional development ideas emerged during the discussion of research question one with the participant. First, it became clear that teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward PWPBIS significantly influence their ability to implement it successfully in their classrooms. Additionally, collaborative support systems emerged as a critical theme. The participant emphasized that feeling supported boosted their

confidence in implementing PWPBIS which was backed by their TPOT score, while a lack of support led some teachers to do only the bare minimum. This lack of support often contributed to negative attitudes toward PWPBIS, which, in turn, hindered successful implementation.

Research Subquestion 1.1 Findings

Research sub question 1.1 examined preschool teachers' beliefs and opinions regarding PBIS. Again, the participant initially began with a broad discussion about the topic before narrowing their focus on their personal beliefs about PWPBIS. They identified several positive aspects of PWPBIS. The participant stated, “PWPBIS focuses on recognizing the positives of the child and reminds me to reinforce the positive behaviors I want to see throughout the day in our classrooms.” This statement stresses the foundational principles of PWPBIS, which aims to reduce challenging behaviors while promoting prosocial behaviors. Additionally, it connects to the emerging theme of professional development and training, emphasizing the importance of teachers understanding the rationale behind PWPBIS. This understanding contributes to another theme—staff buy-in—which is essential for teachers to successfully implement PWPBIS in their classrooms.

Conversely, the participant also expressed some dislikes about PWPBIS. They noted, “A major drawback is the lack of consequences that accompany PWPBIS. I feel like a child needs to receive a consequence for exhibiting a behavior that does not follow the expectations to learn what is expected of them.” This sentiment relates to the barrier of misapplication, where a limited understanding can lead to the inaccurate implementation of the framework. For example, some teachers might perceive PWPBIS implementation as a restriction of consequences whereas the actual focus of PWPBIS is to reduce challenging behavior (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). As the conversation progressed, the participant shared their overall opinion of PWPBIS, stating, “I love

PWPBIS because it focuses on the all-around positive aspects of the whole child. It encourages the kids to make positive choices based on the positive consequences that accompany them. I also love how it builds the child's confidence and helps them feel happy about their decisions.”

Ultimately, the participant's opinions and beliefs about PWPBIS reinforce the theme of professional development for teachers to ensure they understand the foundation and rationale behind PBIS. Without this understanding, there may be limited staff buy-in, negatively impacting teachers' perspectives and potentially leading to unsuccessful implementation of PWPBIS. Furthermore, this ties back to the barrier of misapplication, emphasizing the need for professional development and training to grasp PWPBIS and all its components fully. In conclusion, fostering a comprehensive understanding of PWPBIS among teachers is crucial for its effective implementation and for maximizing the positive outcomes it aims to achieve in preschool settings.

Research Subquestion 1.2 Findings

Research sub question 1.2 focused on preschool teachers' beliefs regarding the adequacy of PWPBIS training. The participant shared her specific views on PWPBIS training, stating, “I feel strongly about the training of PWPBIS; however, it can be overwhelming with how much is involved in each training. I also believe that the trainings are only effective if support is provided in the classroom on a regular basis.” When the researcher explored why the training felt overwhelming, the participant pointed to several factors: the numerous components within PBIS, the timing of the trainings, specifically the duration of each session, the time gaps between trainings, and the challenge of implementing strategies without ongoing support from administration.

This insight connects to the theme of collective support systems available to teachers, particularly from supervisors and administration, emphasizing the importance of staff buy-in at all levels for successful PWPBIS implementation. The participant's responses also highlight barriers related to professional development, specifically the structure of the training sessions. She described the training as overwhelming due to the numerous components involved, and noted that the lengthy intervals between sessions made it challenging to integrate the material effectively. When asked about the impact of these gaps, she mentioned that it was difficult to connect the concepts when trainings occurred only once a year. Additionally, she stressed that without regular support, implementing PWPBIS in the classroom becomes challenging. Overall, research sub question 1.2 emphasizes the importance of both consistent and collaborative support systems and structured professional development to aid successful implementation.

Research Subquestion 1.3 Findings

Research sub question 1.3 explored the barriers that prevent preschool teachers from effectively implementing PWPBIS. When asked, the participant identified persistent challenging behaviors among students as a significant obstacle to successful PWPBIS implementation. Additionally, she noted that a lack of parental support in both home and school settings adds to the difficulty. The participant explained that without sufficient support for children with challenging behaviors, teachers often have to focus on managing behavior to ensure safety for both the child and others. Consequently, this can take precedence over implementing PBIS strategies in the classroom. This feedback highlights how challenging behaviors in preschool can hinder a teacher's ability to fully apply PWPBIS, despite the program's goal of reducing such behaviors. In addition, previously discussed barriers, such as geographical location, may also impact support access, especially in rural settings, where additional support for students with

challenging behaviors may be limited due to program location (Steed et al., 2013). Ultimately, this stresses the need for a strong support system to empower teachers to prioritize both student safety and effective PWPBIS implementation.

Research Subquestion 1.4 Findings

Research question 1.4 explored teachers' overall perceptions of the TPOT. The participant shared candidly, stating that TPOT observations felt extremely overwhelming, made her nervous, and created stress due to the pressure to complete all required tasks within a two-hour window. She expressed concern about the fairness of the evaluation, noting that if a TPOT component didn't naturally arise during the observation—or if a student independently resolved a problem—the teacher wouldn't receive credit for completing all steps, despite the student's successful independence. Additionally, she explained that the TPOT process created extra work, was time-consuming, and that the data collected from it wasn't used constructively. When discussing the purpose of TPOT data, she acknowledged its intent for coaching but perceived coaching negatively, explaining that within her program, coaching felt discouraging rather than supportive.

Furthermore, the participant's reflections suggest that while TPOT aims to support teachers and used as a professional development tool, its current implementation within the program may contribute to stress and create perceptions of coaching as punitive rather than constructive. This insight on teacher observations emerges a new theme of perceptions of observations. This theme captures the participant's feelings about the TPOT process, highlighting how the evaluation structure, the stress of observation, and the perception of coaching contribute to an overall sense of support—or lack thereof—in the program.

Major Themes

This study's review of research on implementing PWPBIS in early childhood settings revealed recurring patterns, highlighting key themes necessary for achieving implementation fidelity in the classroom. Throughout the interviews, participants answered questions that provided opportunities to share their perceptions of the primary contributors to effective PWPBIS practices. The themes emerging from these discussions often aligned with previously established concepts surrounding PWPBIS. The open-ended nature of the questions encouraged participants to expand on their beliefs, provide in-depth explanations, and engage in meaningful discussions. These insights illustrated the complex factors influencing PWPBIS implementation, emphasizing the need to address both supportive elements and obstacles. Ultimately, the five major themes were identified through the data analysis, offering a deeper understanding of PWPBIS fidelity in early childhood education.

Table 7.1 presents the major themes identified during the interviews, along with the total number of statements made. Each statement made by the participant was tallied to identify major recurring themes. The results revealed that attitudes and perspectives emerged frequently throughout the conversations, supporting the research question that teachers' attitudes and perceptions significantly influence their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity.

Table 7.1

Overall Themes Emerged from Participant Statements

Theme	Total Number Of Statements
1. Teachers' Attitudes and Perspectives	9
2. Collaborative Support Systems	4
3. Professional Development Training	3
4. Staff-Buy In	4
5. Perceptions of Observations	2

The first theme, teacher's attitudes and perceptions was the most prominent statement. This statement reoccurred nine different times throughout the interviews as Table 6 shows above. The participant emphasized that embracing PWPBIS fostered a positive attitude, which facilitated successful implementation and positively impacted classroom management, the learning environment, and the handling of challenging behaviors. Ultimately reducing challenging behaviors within the classroom. Their belief in the program served as a foundation for ensuring fidelity in PWPBIS practices.

Another prominent theme that repeatedly surfaced was collaborative support systems. The participant highlighted the significance of collective support from families, support staff, and administration, noting that such collaboration instilled confidence and reassurance in implementing PWPBIS. In contrast, a lack of this support often resulted in minimal effort leading to ineffective implementation.

Professional development training emerged as a third key theme. The data reflected participants' beliefs about the adequacy of PWPBIS training, with one participant expressing that the training felt overwhelming due to its length, the volume of content covered, and the time gaps between sessions. Furthermore, the data indicated that training was only effective when teachers received adequate support and observed modeled practices, both of which are essential for implementing PWPBIS strategies effectively.

Additionally, staff buy-in emerged as a crucial theme throughout the conversation, as the participant consistently reaffirmed the importance of believing in PWPBIS, its foundational principles, and its ultimate goal of reducing challenging behaviors. To add, professional development and training emerged as a key theme, stressing the necessity of providing teachers

with adequate training in PWPBIS. The participant pointed out that without proper training, misconceptions and misapplications could arise, leading to ineffective implementation.

Finally, the participant's perceptions of TPOT observations highlighted how attitudes and perspectives strongly impact teachers' implementation of PWPBIS. Her feelings toward these observations highlights the significant role that attitudes play in successful PBIS application.

Ultimately, the data revealed five key themes that contribute to the successful implementation of PWPBIS with fidelity. These themes—teachers' attitudes and perspectives, collaborative support systems, professional development training, staff buy-in, and perceptions of observations—significantly influence the effectiveness of the PWPBIS within classrooms. These insights collectively highlight the complex nature of successfully implementing PWPBIS in the classroom.

Perceived Barriers

While several positive themes emerged from the interview, a few barriers were also identified. Many of these have already been discussed such as using an assessment tool, staff buy-in, geographical location, professional development, and teachers' perceptions. In the study conducted by Tyre and Feuerborn (2021), noted teacher perceptions hinder effective PBIS implementation. Often, teachers may only partially understand PBIS, focusing on isolated practices rather than the full framework. This contributes to misapplication of PWPBIS practices and lack of staff-buy in.

Table 7.2 presents barriers identified during the interviews, along with the total number of statements made. The results revealed that lack of staff buy-in stood out as the primary barrier, contributing to insufficient professional development training and limitations in support systems.

Table 7.2

Overall Barriers Emerged from Participants Statements

Barriers	Total Number Of Statements
1. Lack of Staff Buy-in	8
2. Insufficient Professional Development Training	5
3. Misapplication of PBIS Practices	2
4. Persistent Challenging Behaviors	3
5. Limitations in Support Systems	4

The conversation began with a discussion of staff buy-in, highlighting that while it is a recurring theme, it is also the most substantial barrier. The participant expressed a belief in PWPBIS and its objectives, noting that a lack of belief among staff could hinder successful implementation. They referenced former coworkers who struggled with implementation due to their skepticism about PWPBIS. Successful implementation of PBIS relies heavily on teachers' commitment (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012).

Another identified barrier was insufficient professional development training. The participant described PWPBIS training as overwhelming and complex due to its many components, along with issues related to the timing of the sessions, such as their duration and the gaps between them. This barrier is closely linked to the TPOT observation process, where a lack of training on the tool itself left teachers uncertain about its purpose. The participant noted, "I'm not sure what the data was used for and how it applied." This statement highlights the insufficient training surrounding TPOT as well.

To expand on the issue of inadequate professional development, the misapplication of PWPBIS practices highlights the critical need for effective training. Without proper training, staff may fail to grasp the entirety of PWPBIS and how its various components function

cohesively. The participant expressed a concern about the lack of consequences for children who do not meet expectations, which emphasizes the misapplication of PBIS as a barrier.

Another significant barrier was persistent challenging behavior, which the participant directly identified when asked about the obstacles hindering PWPBIS implementation. They explained that when challenging behaviors occur frequently and without additional support, the focus shifts to ensuring the safety of the child and others in the classroom. Consequently, this forces them to pause the implementation of PWPBIS. Without consistent application of PWPBIS, achieving fidelity becomes extremely challenging. Lastly, limitations in support systems emerged as a barrier closely linked to persistent challenging behavior. When there is insufficient support from administration, teachers are left to manage challenging behaviors on their own, which often results in them having to pause the implementation of PWPBIS practices.

In conclusion, five barriers emerged that hinder teachers from implementing PWPBIS effectively. These barriers include a lack of staff buy-in, insufficient professional development training, misapplication of PWPBIS practices, persistent challenging behaviors, and limitations in support systems. Overall, the data provides valuable insights into the themes that facilitate successful implementation, while also highlighting the obstacles that impede the effective application of PWPBIS with fidelity.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data revealed several themes and barriers from the interviews with the participant. The findings for Research Question 1 indicated that attitudes and perspectives significantly influence the implementation of PWPBIS, while supportive systems help boost teachers' confidence and foster buy-in. Additionally, it highlighted the necessity of professional development training to break down each component of PWPBIS, allowing teachers to focus on

one element at a time. Research Sub question 1.1 reinforced the significance of professional development training by underscoring the importance of understanding the foundation of PWPBIS. It also identified barriers such as lack of staff buy-in and misapplication, suggesting that without a solid understanding of the framework, teachers are less likely to embrace it fully and may misapply it in their classrooms.

Research Sub question 1.2 connected to the themes of collective support and staff buy-in, emphasizing that adequate support is essential for successful PWPBIS implementation. Moreover, it highlighted the barrier of insufficient training, noting that the structure and pacing of training sessions can overwhelm staff. Research Sub question 1.3 concluded that persistent challenging behavior serves as a significant barrier to implementing PWPBIS, particularly when there is a lack of support to address these behaviors. Finally, Research Sub question 1.4 provided insight into the theme of perceptions surrounding observations, specifically how the participant felt about the TPOT process, the associated stress, and the negative connotation of the coaching data.

Conclusion

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based framework designed to reduce challenging behaviors while promoting social-emotional competencies and academic achievement. Program-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PWPBIS) has been adapted specifically to meet the needs of early childhood settings. To explore the attitudes and perspectives of teachers implementing PWPBIS with fidelity, a retrospective single case study was conducted to determine how these factors influence their ability to implement the framework effectively. An interview was conducted with a former employee of Mercer County

Head Start, utilizing the research question and sub questions to facilitate a natural conversation that would allow themes and barriers to emerge organically.

The qualitative data revealed several definitive themes from the participants' responses. The first theme that emerged was the impact of attitudes and perspectives, indicating that teachers' viewpoints can significantly influence their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity in the classroom. Another key theme was collaborative support systems, which provide reassurance to teachers about their capacity to implement PWPBIS effectively. When challenging behaviors arise, the support offered to teachers helps them maintain their focus on PBIS implementation. Additionally, professional development training and staff buy-in surfaced as essential themes, highlighting the role of training in fostering staff buy-in and teaching teachers how to implement PWPBIS. These elements are interconnected in facilitating effective implementation. Lastly, perceptions of observations were identified as a factor influencing PWPBIS implementation; understanding the purpose of observations and how the data is utilized is crucial for success. Several barriers also emerged from the participant's responses, including a lack of staff buy-in, insufficient professional development training, misapplication of PWPBIS practices, persistent challenging behaviors, and limitations in support systems. Overall, the case study's data indicated that teachers' attitudes and perceptions play a significant role in their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity. The upcoming chapter provides a summary of the case study's results, examines its limitations, the implications of the results, and offers recommendations for future research. These recommendations aim to deepen the understanding of how teachers' perspectives on PWPBIS influence implementation fidelity in the classroom and their overall impact on early childhood programs.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore how preschool teachers' attitudes and perspectives influence their ability to implement PBIS with fidelity in the classroom. The researcher focused on early childhood programs that had implemented PWPBIS for at least two full years, had a well-established leadership team, and utilized an assessment tool to evaluate implementation practices. Only one early childhood program met all of these criteria.

A retrospective case study methodology was utilized to conduct in-depth interviews with the participant to gather qualitative data naturally from the conversations. The participant responded to the research questions and sub questions in an open-ended format to identify common themes, trends, barriers, and insights that could enhance PWPBIS fidelity, with a particular focus on the connection between professional development and teaching practices. The goal of the study was to provide a narrative on how the participant's perceptions and experiences impacted their ability to implement PWPBIS in the classroom with fidelity. To achieve this, the following research questions and sub questions were addressed:

1. How do the attitudes and perspectives of preschool teachers impact their capacity to implement Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with fidelity within the classroom setting?

- 1.1 What are the beliefs and opinions of preschool teachers towards Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?

1.2 What beliefs do preschool teachers hold regarding sufficient training in Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to implement with fidelity within the classroom?

1.3 What are the barriers preventing preschool teachers from effectively implementing Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports practices and interventions?

1.4 How do you feel about the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) overall?

Summary of the Results

The researcher analyzed data from multiple interviews with a former Mercer County Head Start employee to explore how the participant's experiences and challenges impact PWPBIS implementation. The qualitative analysis focused on identifying themes and barriers for future professional development and teaching practices. Throughout the interviews, the participant responded to several questions that allowed them to express their views on the key contributors and barriers affecting their ability to implement PWPBIS with fidelity. The themes that emerged from these discussions frequently intersected with previously mentioned concepts related to PWPBIS. The open-ended nature of the questions (Appendix A) encouraged the participant to elaborate on their beliefs, provide detailed explanations, and engage in meaningful dialogue. In reviewing the research on successfully implementing PWPBIS in early childhood settings, several common components have been identified as major contributors or barriers to fidelity in classroom implementation. Overall, these insights illustrate the complex factors influencing PWPBIS implementation and emphasize the need to address both contributors and obstacles to ensure successful fidelity.

The qualitative data analysis from the participant interviews revealed several key themes and barriers. Findings for Research Question 1 indicated that teachers' attitudes and perspectives play a significant role in implementing PWPBIS, with supportive systems boosting teachers' confidence and promoting buy-in. Additionally, it highlighted the need for professional development that breaks down each PWPBIS component, enabling teachers to focus on one element at a time. Research sub question 1.1 reinforced the importance of professional development by emphasizing the need to understand the foundation of PWPBIS. Barriers such as limited staff buy-in and misapplication were identified, suggesting that without a solid grasp of the framework, teachers may struggle to embrace and accurately apply it in the classroom. Research sub question 1.2 addressed the themes of collective support and staff buy-in, stressing that adequate support is essential for effective PWPBIS implementation. It also noted insufficient training as a barrier, highlighting that the structure and pacing of training sessions can overwhelm staff. Research sub question 1.3 identified persistent challenging behaviors as a major obstacle to implementing PWPBIS, particularly when support to manage these behaviors is lacking. Finally, Research sub question 1.4 shed light on perceptions surrounding observations, revealing the participant's feelings about the TPOT process, the stress associated with it, and the negative connotations attached to coaching data.

The primary themes that emerged from the participant's perspective included teachers' attitudes and perceptions, collaborative support systems, professional development training, staff buy-in, and perceptions of observations. The participant emphasized that embracing PWPBIS fosters a positive attitude, which facilitates successful implementation and enhances classroom management, the learning environment, and the handling of challenging behaviors, ultimately

reducing such behaviors. Their belief in the program served as a foundation for ensuring fidelity in PWPBIS practices.

Collaborative support systems also emerged as a prominent theme. The participant highlighted the importance of collective support from families, support staff, and administration, noting that such collaboration instills confidence and reassurance in implementing PWPBIS. Conversely, a lack of support often results in minimal effort and ineffective implementation. Staff buy-in was another crucial theme throughout the conversation, with the participant consistently affirming the importance of believing in PWPBIS, its foundational principles, and its ultimate goal of reducing challenging behaviors.

Professional development and training were identified as key themes, underscoring the necessity of providing teachers with adequate training in PWPBIS. The participant pointed out that without proper training, misconceptions and misapplications can arise, leading to ineffective implementation. Additionally, the participant's perceptions of TPOT observations revealed how attitudes and perspectives significantly impact teachers' implementation of PWPBIS, highlighting the critical role that these attitudes play in successful PBIS application.

In summary, five major themes emerged from the discussion: teachers' attitudes and perceptions, collaborative support systems, staff buy-in, professional development training, and perceptions of observations. These insights collectively underscore the complex nature of successfully implementing PBIS in the classroom.

While several positive themes were identified in the interview, some barriers were also noted. The first barrier is a lack of staff buy-in, which poses a significant obstacle to successful implementation. The conversation began with a discussion of staff buy-in, emphasizing that while it is a recurring theme, it remains a substantial barrier. The participant expressed belief in

PWPBIS and its objectives, noting that skepticism among staff could hinder successful implementation. They referenced former coworkers who struggled with implementation due to their doubts about PWPBIS. The successful implementation of PBIS heavily relies on teachers' commitment (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012).

Another barrier identified was insufficient professional development training. The participant described PWPBIS training as overwhelming and complex, citing the numerous components involved and issues related to the timing of the sessions, such as duration and gaps between them. This barrier is closely tied to the TPOT observation process, where a lack of training on the tool itself left teachers uncertain about its purpose. The participant noted, "I'm not sure what the data was used for and how it applied," highlighting the inadequacy of training surrounding TPOT. Additionally, the misapplication of PWPBIS practices underscores the critical need for effective training; without it, staff may struggle to understand how PWPBIS components function cohesively. The participant expressed concern about the lack of consequences for children who do not meet expectations, further emphasizing the misapplication of PBIS as a barrier.

Persistent challenging behavior also emerged as a significant barrier. The participant identified this issue directly when asked about obstacles hindering PWPBIS implementation, explaining that frequent challenging behaviors, coupled with a lack of additional support, shift the focus to ensuring safety in the classroom. Consequently, this forces them to pause the implementation of PWPBIS, making it extremely difficult to achieve fidelity. Lastly, limitations in support systems were identified as another barrier, particularly in relation to persistent challenging behavior. When teachers lack sufficient support from administration, they are left to

manage challenging behaviors on their own, often leading to the suspension of PWPBIS practices.

In conclusion, the implementation of PWPBIS in early childhood settings is influenced by a complex interplay of contributing factors and barriers. While positive themes such as supportive attitudes, collaborative systems, and effective professional development emerged from the participant's insights, significant obstacles, including a lack of staff buy-in, insufficient training, and persistent challenging behaviors, were also identified. Addressing these barriers is crucial for achieving fidelity in PWPBIS practices. By fostering a culture of support, enhancing professional development opportunities, and ensuring that all staff members are invested in the PWPBIS framework, educators can create a more effective and conducive learning environment. Ultimately, understanding and addressing these dynamics will enhance the potential for successful PBIS implementation, thereby benefiting both educators and students in early childhood settings.

Limitations

The study faced several limitations that may impact the validity of the findings. One major limitation was the limited number of early childhood programs that qualified for participation in the research and results in one early childhood program used for the case study. This restriction resulted in a small participant pool, which may not adequately represent the diverse experiences and perspectives of teachers implementing PWPBIS across various settings. The lack of participants ultimately forced a shift to a retrospective case study approach, further narrowing the scope of the research and potentially affecting the depth of insights gathered.

Additionally, the reliance on a previous employee for the case study introduced another layer of limitation. The participant's reflections were based on their personal experiences and

memories, which given the time gap, over a span of seven years, may have lacked important details, subject to bias, and inaccuracies in recollection. While their insights provided valuable context and firsthand knowledge, they may not capture the full range of experiences or the current dynamics present in the program. Consequently, these limitations emphasize the need for caution in interpreting the findings and highlight the importance of broader, more diverse participant involvement in future research on PWPBIS implementation. Additionally, researcher bias is a potential limitation. The researcher's personal experience in training teachers in PWPBIS, implementing PWPBIS, and serving as a TPOT observer could have influenced the identification of themes, barriers, and areas for further professional development during data collection.

Implications of the Results

This retrospective case study has implications for early childhood programs that are currently implementing PWPBIS or programs who might be planning on implementing PWPBIS. The implications of the results are diverse and highlight four important areas for consideration for early childhood programs.

Professional Development Needs. The findings emphasize the necessity for targeted and effective professional development training tailored to early childhood educators. Addressing misconceptions and providing comprehensive training on the PWPBIS framework can enhance teachers' understanding and implementation fidelity. Additionally, it is important to consider the frequency of the training sessions, the complexity of the components, the duration of each session, and the specific training related to TPOT. By focusing on specific components of PWPBIS and allowing educators to engage in practical, hands-on learning, programs can better equip teachers to apply these practices in their classrooms.

Enhancing Staff Buy-In. The results revealed the critical role of staff buy-in in the successful implementation of PWPBIS. Cultivating a shared belief in the framework among all staff members is essential. This can be achieved through collaborative discussions, involving teachers in decision-making processes, and demonstrating the positive outcomes of PWPBIS practices. Ensuring buy-in is established within the program before beginning to implement PWPBIS is crucial. In addition to fostering a supportive environment that values teacher input and experiences can help mitigate resistance and promote greater acceptance of PWPBIS.

Support Systems. The importance of collaborative support systems emerged as a significant theme in the findings. Building strong partnerships among families, support staff, and administration is vital for creating a collaborative and supportive environment for educators. Providing consistent support and resources can help teachers feel more confident in their ability to implement PWPBIS, ultimately leading to more effective practices in the classroom.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors. The study illustrates the persistent challenge of managing difficult behaviors in early childhood settings and its impact on PWPBIS implementation. Addressing this issue requires not only strategies for behavior management but also collaborative support that empowers teachers to address these behaviors proactively. Early childhood programs should consider integrating behavioral support systems that provide additional resources and training for educators facing significant behavioral challenges.

Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations identified in the study, particularly the reliance on a single participant's retrospective narrative, stresses the need for future research involving a larger and more diverse participant base. Expanding studies to incorporate a larger sample size with diverse demographics, locations, and backgrounds would offer a richer understanding of PWPBIS

implementation with fidelity. This would help develop a more complete narrative on how to successfully sustain and implement PWPBIS with fidelity. This expanded research might also include longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of training and support on PWPBIS fidelity and student outcomes. Furthermore, increased focus on PBIS in early childhood settings within future studies and literature would enhance professional development opportunities for educators, ultimately leading to improved instructional practices and greater student success in the classroom.

Conclusion

The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers' perspectives and attitudes affect their ability to implement PBIS with fidelity in their classrooms and to identify related trends. The data revealed several major themes and barriers that contribute to the successful implementation of PWPBIS with fidelity. These themes include staff attitudes and perspectives, collaborative support systems, professional development training, staff buy-in, and perceptions of observations. Among these, staff attitudes and perspectives emerged as the most significant theme, reinforcing the research question that teachers' attitudes greatly influence their capacity to implement PWPBIS with fidelity.

Additionally, barriers were identified during the data analysis. These included a lack of staff buy-in, insufficient professional development training, misapplication of PWPBIS practices, persistent challenging behavior, and limitations in support systems. Notably, the lack of staff buy-in was the primary barrier hindering teachers from implementing PWPBIS effectively, which was closely linked to the issue of inadequate professional development training.

These trends, whether significant influences or barriers, can guide future research and assist other early childhood programs in successfully implementing PWPBIS. While there is

substantial research on the successful implementation of PBIS in elementary schools, there is far less research on how to effectively implement and sustain PWPBIS with fidelity in early childhood programs. As more early childhood programs adopt PWPBIS with fidelity, the positive effects on teaching practices and child outcomes will become increasingly evident. Conducting more research on staff buy-in and professional development for early childhood educators and the implementation of PWPBIS within early childhood settings will provide valuable insights that can strengthen teaching practices and improve program fidelity over time.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question 1: How do the attitudes and perspectives of preschool teachers impact their capacity to implement Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with fidelity within the classroom setting?

- 1.1 Can you describe why you have a positive view of PBIS?
- 1.2 What type of support did you receive and can you describe it in detail?
- 1.3 What type of support did you receive from your classroom, supervisor, and administration?
- 1.4 Can you describe any specific experiences where your attitude or perspective influenced how you implemented PWPBIS strategies in the classroom?
- 1.5 Can you describe why you think why some of your colleagues had negative views on PBIS?
- 1.6 When you talk about PBIS components with training, can you be more specific?
- 1.7 What are your personal beliefs towards PBIS?
- 1.8 Do you know what your previous overall TPOT scores were?

Question 2: What are the beliefs and opinions of preschool teachers towards Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports?

- 2.1 Can you explain more about why you disliked PBIS?
- 2.2 Can you provide more detail into why you liked PBIS?
- 2.3 How did you beliefs impact your classroom?
- 2.4 How did your beliefs impact your implementation of PBIS?

2.5 What impact did your beliefs have on your students?

Question 3: What beliefs do preschool teachers hold regarding sufficient training in Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to implement with fidelity within the classroom?

3.1 Can you provide more detail into the training you received?

3.2 How did the training impact your ability to implement PBIS in your classroom?

3.3 What type of professional development training did you receive?

3.4 What was your attitude towards PBIS training?

3.4 How were the trainings structured?

3.5 Why did the training feel so overwhelming?

Question 4: What are the barriers preventing preschool teachers from effectively implementing Program – Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports practices and interventions?

4.1 What type of barriers do you believe impacted your ability?

4.2 Can you describe the type of behaviors in your classroom?

4.3 What impact did insufficient support have on your classroom?

4.4 What impact did insufficient support have on your PBIS implementation?

4.5 Can you go into detail about parent support?

Question 5: How do you feel about the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) overall?

5.1 Do you know what the programs overall TPOT score was?

5.2 How was the data used within your program?

- 5.3 Why do you think TPOT was not fair?
- 5.4 What were the stressors of TPOT?
- 5.5 Can you provide more detail into why you felt overwhelmed?
- 5.6 What additional pressure did you feel and why?
- 5.7 Do you see any benefit to TPOT observations?
- 5.8 What are your views towards coaching with TPOT?

APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH
PROGRAM

Name:
Title:
Program:
Address:

Request For Permission to Conduct Research with Faculty

Dear _____

I am Madelyn Shuttleworth, a doctoral student at Slippery Rock University. I am contacting you to request your authorization for conducting research within your program, specifically focusing on faculty members for my doctoral dissertation. The study aims to explore teachers' attitudes and perspectives regarding the implementation of Program Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS). The research will be carried out under the guidance of Dr. Ashlea Rineer – Hershey, a faculty member at Slippery Rock University.

I am requesting your approval to obtain faculty contact information for the purpose of conducting email questionnaires with your faculty members. Additionally, I am seeking permission to obtain existing Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) data that was previously conducted by your program to assess the fidelity of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) implementation.

You have indicated that (program name) has implemented PWPBIS for at least two years and has a well-established leadership team utilizing the Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality (ECBoQ) to evaluate PWPBIS progress. In addition, the team uses an assessment tool (TPOT) to gauge fidelity in classrooms.

As PWPBIS gains prominence in early childhood programs nationwide, my objective is to identify common themes among teachers' perspectives on PWBIS, understand barriers hindering fidelity in implementation, and explore potential professional development opportunities that enable early childhood programs to implement PWPBIS with fidelity.

By signing the line at the bottom, you authorize the contact of your faculty and the sharing of PWBIS information for the purpose of conducting the study. After concluding the study, I will submit the research report to Slippery Rock University. If you need additional information, please feel free to reach out to me at 724-815-9831 or via email at mls1057@sru.edu. Thank you for your attention and time regarding this matter.

Sincerely,
Madelyn Shuttleworth, M.Ed

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT EMAIL

Good Morning!

I hope this email find you well and you are having a fantastic start of the 2024-2025 school year. I invite you to participate in a research study titled, “Preschool Teachers’ Perspectives on Implementing PBIS with Fidelity.” I am currently enrolled in the Doctorate in Special Education program at Slippery Rock University and in the process of writing my Doctoral dissertation.

The purpose of the research is to explore how a teacher's perspective influences their capability to implement Program Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with fidelity. I am seeking your participation because your employer has identified you as a classroom teacher who has undergone a Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) observation. Furthermore, you are currently implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in your classroom.

I am inviting you allow us to obtain your previous TPOT observation scores, to complete a self-reported Teacher Skills and Strategies Checklist, and a questionnaire. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may decline, or leave blank any questions you do not wish to answer. There are minimal risks to participation; however, it may prompt psychological risks and self-reflection on past negative experiences. Your responses will remain confidential and the questionnaire responses will be anonymous. Your name and any other information that can directly identify you will be coded and stored separately from the data collected as part of the project. Data from this research will be stored on a password-protected drive, accessible only to the researchers. Your individual answers to the Teacher Skills and Strategies Checklist and the questionnaire will remain confidential, will not be shared with your administrators, and will not be disclosed to anyone else besides researchers involved in the study.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

A separate email will be sent that will contain the links the Teacher Skills and Strategies Checklist and questionnaire if you agree to participate in the study. It should take you approximately forty-five minutes to an hour to complete both.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact me at 724-815-9831, or at mls1057@sru.edu.

Thank you for your attention in this important endeavor,
Madelyn Shuttleworth

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT



College of Education

 CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN CASE STUDY

Preschool Teachers' Perspectives on Implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with Fidelity: A Case Study.

Madelyn Shuttleworth, mls1057@sru.edu, 724-815-9831

Invitation to be Part of a Case Study

You are invited to participate in a case study. In order to participate, you must be a current early childhood teacher at your school, undergone a Teacher Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) observation, and implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) within your classroom. Taking part in this case project is voluntary.

Important Information about the Case Study

Things you should know:

- The purpose of the study is to explore a teacher's perspective and experiences in the implementation of Program Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with fidelity. If you choose to participate, you are giving us permission to obtain your TPOT scores and participate in interviews through a case study.
- Risks or discomforts from this study are minimal, but may prompt psychological risks and self-reflection on past negative experiences.
- The study will lead to possible benefits of self-reflection of your own teaching practices and experiences.
- Taking part in this study project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can stop at any time.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the Study About and Why are We Doing it?

The purpose of the study is to explore teacher's perspective and experiences in the implementation PWPBIS with fidelity. The study will investigate the professional development

opportunities of PWPBIS and identify potential barriers hindering teaching staff from effectively implementing PWPBIS within the early childhood setting.

What Will Happen if You Take Part in This Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you are giving us permission to obtain your past TPOT scores and participate in interviews. Your answers will remain confidential and will not be shared with your administrators.

How Could You Benefit from This Study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because the study could prompt a self-reflective process to analyze and consider their teaching practices. You might benefit from being in this study because you might gain a deeper understanding of Program-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports as you reflect on your own teaching practices through your involvement in the study.

What Risks Might Result from Being in This Study?

You might experience some risks from being in this study. Discussing past experiences may carry psychological risks or trigger the recall of negative memories.

How Will We Protect Your Information?

We intend to publish the results of this study as part of a dissertation. To protect your privacy, we will not include information that could directly identify you. We will protect the confidentiality of your research records by keeping all responses on a password protected drive. Your name and any other information that can directly identify you will be coded and stored separately from the data collected as part of the project.

What Will Happen to the Information We Collect About You After the Study is Over?

We will not keep your data to use for future research or other purposes. Your data will be permanently deleted following the conclusion of the study. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be kept secure and stored separately from the research data collected as part of the project.

What Other Choices do I Have if I Don't Take Part in this Study?

If you choose not to participate, there are no other choices. You can simply choose not to participate and the researchers will not contact you any further.

Your Participation in this Research is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be part of the case study research. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, you can contact the researchers and we will remove your information from the data collected.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this case study, you may contact **Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey, principal investigator at a.rineer-hershey@sru.edu, or Madelyn Shuttleworth, co-investigator, at mls1057@sru.edu or 724-815-9831.**

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Case Study Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a case study participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Institutional Review Board
Slippery Rock University
104 Maltby, Suite 302
Slippery Rock, PA 16057
Phone: (724)738-4846
Email: irb@sru.edu

Your Consent

Please select the boxes below to indicate your consent to the following (you can choose to check all, some, or none of the boxes below):

- Discuss the programs TPOT Data
- Discuss your specific TPOT Data
- Consent to multiple interviews (if needed)

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Consent Form has been given to me.

APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL



TO: Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey
Special Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James A. Preston".

FROM: _____
James Preston, D.Ed., Chairperson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DATE: October 18, 2024

RE: Protocol Approved

Protocol #: CS25-017-88-A
Protocol Title: Preschool Teachers' Perspectives on Implementing Positive
Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with Fidelity:
A Case Study Analysis

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Slippery Rock University has conducted an administrative review of the above-referenced protocol under the "exempt" category.

You may begin your project as of October 18, 2024. Your protocol will automatically close on October 17, 2025, unless you request, in writing, to keep it open.

Please contact the IRB Office by phone at (724)738-4846 or via e-mail at irb@sru.edu should your protocol change in any way.