A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ONE-TO-ONE PARAEDUCATORS' SELF-

EFFICACY IN SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by

Deborah Schloemer-Frazer

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. The theory guiding this study is Bandura's social cognitive theory, which describes self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to complete a designated task (Bandura, 1997a). Bandura purports that there are four elements that contribute to one's self-efficacy: performance outcomes, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective state (Bandura, 1997b). In this phenomenological study, eleven one-to-one paraeducators within one school district in western Washington participated in interviews, focus groups, and audio journals to share their perceptions. Participants' responses were coded into patterns then analyzed to discover themes. Throughout this investigation, the central research question is: What are the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms? While participants expressed an overwhelming sense of stress associated with their position, they also believed that the joy received from working with their student was worth it. This study found that one-to-one paraeducators' roles are unique and often misunderstood therefore, creating a mental strain from being on the bottom of the totem pole with very little support.

Keywords: one-to-one paraprofessional, one-to-one paraeducator, teacher's aide, special education, self-contained

Copyright Page

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who have encouraged me to follow my dreams. To my parents, who taught me to enjoy to small things in life, the best lesson I have carried with me. To my husband, who has helped me to follow my passion and shown so much love throughout the struggles I conquered to achieve my goals. I will always appreciate the support you have all devoted to me.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr. Sandra Battige and the time she has devoted to helping me succeed. She is an amazing teacher who helped me to embrace my learning style and spent many hours guiding me. Dr. Battige has instilled growth in my writing and knowledge. I will forever have sincere gratitude for the encouragement and love that Dr. Battige shared to help me succeed.

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List of Abbreviations

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE)

Fundamental Course of Study (FCS)

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Paraeducators make up half of the instructional staff in special education (Lemons, 2018) with 435,817 special education paraeducators who provide services to students ages 6-21 under IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Research indicates that the assistance provided by paraeducators can be beneficial in supporting the needs of students with disabilities (Douglas et al., 2016). Yet research also reveals a lack of clarity in paraeducators' roles and responsibilities, training needs, support and guidance from supervisors, and self-efficacy (Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019). Most of the research conducted regarding paraeducators has primarily focused on classroom paraeducators, leaving out the unique needs of one-to-one paraeducators assigned to an individual student who is significantly impacted by a disability (Hendrix et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2019). It would be beneficial for their educational leaders to understand the context that paraeducators work within to support paraeducators in meeting their roles and responsibilities (Lee et al., 2017). Therefore, this transcendental phenomenological study aims to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms.

The remaining sections of this chapter contain information pertaining to this study. Specifically, this phenomenon's historical, societal, and theoretical background are conferred along with my motivations and philosophical assumptions regarding this research. Additionally, the research problem, statement, and significance for the need of the study are addressed. Finally, the research questions and operational definitions used throughout this study are presented.

Background

One-to-one paraeducators are valuable members of a student's education and the classroom team. Analyzing the historical development, impact on society, and theoretical underpinnings pertaining to one-to-one paraeducators assisting individual students with disabilities are foundational elements that must be explored to fully understand the issues. The following content provides a historical, social, and theoretical context regarding the investigation of one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions of self-efficacy.

Historical Overview

Since the 1950s, the roles, responsibilities, and titles of paraeducators have shifted through the development of educational organizations and laws. Due to teacher shortages in the 1950s, teacher aides were introduced to support clerical tasks, monitor playgrounds and lunch areas, and perform other tasks that assisted teachers in addressing student educational needs (Pacleb, 2019). Teacher aides also referred to as auxiliary personnel, became more prevalent in the mid-1960s as federal funds apart of the congressional War on Poverty and Elementary and Secondary Education School Act of 1965 (ESEA) focused on raising student achievement (National Education Association, 2019). In 1965, Head Start addressed education for students from low-income backgrounds to promote early intervention for students statistically at risk for special education services.

In 1974, researchers began to study concerns related to the organization and servicing of paraeducators, including examining their 'proper' professional and legal relationships working with teachers (National Education Association, 2019). This research sparked the investigation of best practices for paraeducators. A historical shift occurred in 1975 when the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (Public Law 94-142) promoted children with disabilities to

enter public schools, transforming paraeducators' roles and education socially. The term for auxiliary personnel changed to paraprofessionals (National Education Association, 2019). Paraeducators are often referred to as paraprofessionals, teacher aides, teaching assistants, or paras (Sheehey et al., 2018). These monumental events in education have all contributed to the roles of education staff, including paraeducators and the role of one-to-one paraeducators.

Education professionals find that as more students with special needs are included with their general education peers, more one-to-one paraeducators have become increasingly common (Brock et al., 2017; Stewart, 2019). A one-to-one paraeducator is assigned to one student with a disability for individualized support throughout the student's school day (Russel et al., 2015; Stewart, 2019). Research suggests that when not supported, paraeducators may inadvertently provide excessive proximity, prompting, and stigmatization, leading to negative student outcomes (Miller et al., 2019; Stewart, 2019). This overreliance is especially true when little training and direction is provided to the paraeducators (Azad, 2015; Brock et al., 2017; Douglas et al., 2016). Most research regarding one-to-one paraeducators did not exist until about the year 2000. With a somewhat short history of one-to-one paraeducators, the available research shows a need for further investigation of one-to-one paraeducators.

Social Context

The social context or lens through which disabilities are viewed has transitioned from a medical model, focused on what is "wrong" with a student, toward a social model, focusing on facilitating integration into society (Winzer, 1993). The goal of special education is to prepare students, regardless of their abilities, "for further education, employment and independent living" (IDEA, 2004, Section 1400(d)). Independent living is generally defined as the skills needed to successfully contribute to society as an adult (Cronin, 1996). The importance of life skills is

further substantiated by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which defines a

person with a disability as

> a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more
>
> major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a
>
> person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment (U.S. Department of
>
> Justice 2005)

Not only does the ADA prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, but the heart

of this legislation is also a desire to normalize living experiences for those with disabilities

(NCD, 2007)

One of the primary barriers to independent living for those with disabilities is skill

deficiencies (Yildiz & Cavkaytar, 2020). Paraeducators have become an integral part of the

educational team in assisting students with acquiring life skills. However, as early as 1998,

concerns have been expressed that paraeducators' role ambiguity may be a barrier to student

learning (McVay, 1998). Unfortunately, these concerns continue to persist (Azad et al., 2015;

Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019).

The number of students who are served under IDEA continues to rise. Likewise, there is

a positive correlation with paraeducators entering the field to assist them (U.S. Department of

Education, National Center for Statistics, 2018). In response to this growth, the No Child Left

Behind Act of 2002 and the IDEA of 2004 urged educational leaders to require training of one-

to-one paraeducators (Swenson, 2020). While action has begun to impact the performance of

students, it has uncovered that their one-to-one paraeducators have little-to-no educational

training in delivering critical services (Douglas et al., 2016) and are unclear about their roles

(Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019). To accomplish the

mandates of IDEA and the ADA, further investigation into the experiences of paraeducators is needed.

Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical context of this phenomenological research study will be established through the application of Bandura's (1997a) social cognitive theory (SCT), focusing on the sources of self-efficacy. Bandura's (1997a) SCT defines self-efficacy as one's belief in their ability to complete a task successfully. According to Bandura (2006), self-efficacy influences how much effort an individual will assert to complete a task and how long they will sustain those efforts. Bandura purports that individuals form beliefs regarding their abilities by interpreting information from four sources, including performance outcomes or mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997a). Positive experiences from these four sources lead to positive self-efficacy, while negative experiences lead to a low sense of self-efficacy.

Mastery experiences also referred to as performance outcomes, are described as the most influential source of self-efficacy and are the totality of one's personal experiences with a task (Bandura, 1997c). The more successful one is at completing a task, the more confident one feels. Likewise, experiencing failure lowers one's self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences are those events in which a person has the opportunity to observe others in similar roles. By observing others succeed or fail at a task, an individual typically makes assumptions about their own abilities. The third source of self-efficacy is social or verbal persuasion. Similar in nature to encouragement, external praise and support influence a person's belief that they have the potential to succeed (Bandura, 1997c). The final source of self-efficacy is physiological and affective states. Essentially, Bandura describes this element as the feelings a person experiences

when thinking about or completing a certain task. Positive feelings typically evoke a sense of positive self-efficacy, while negative feelings have an adverse effect (Bandura, 1997c). Applying Bandura's self-efficacy theory, specifically, the sources of self-efficacy will provide a theoretical framework to capture paraeducators' experiences supporting individual students.

Situation to Self

My motivation for conducting this transcendental phenomenological study comes from my experience as a special education teacher working with students who are severely impacted by their cognitive and physical disabilities. I have a passion for creatively helping these students access life in functional ways. These students are often in self-contained special education programs and receive a one-to-one paraeducator to help them learn necessary life-functioning skills. These paraeducators are often paramount to a student's success. While in my personal experience, many one-to-one paraeducators enter the job with a passion for helping but having limited experience or direction. As a self-contained classroom teacher, I often oversee up to ten one-to-one paraeducators tasked with supporting an individual. I have heard the honest conversations of one-to-one paraeducators who have expressed their frustrations regarding the unique challenges. Through this research, I hope that I can better understand the experiences and needs of one-to-one paraeducators so that I can better support them in the future.

Research Paradigm & Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions are helpful in understanding the direction of research goals and outcomes, the scope of the researcher's training and experience, and provides a basic understanding of the evaluative criteria for research-related decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is important to articulate these assumptions so that the readers of the study understand my viewpoint. According to Creswell (2012), three assumptions should be considered at the onset of

every qualitative research study. My ontological, epistemological, axiological, and rhetorical assumptions follow.

Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy dedicated to describing the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a Christian, I believe there is only one truth, which is the word of God, the Bible. However, I also believe that how others perceive that truth is most often socially constructed and largely based on their personal experiences. Similarly, qualitative researchers believe that the participants' experiences are what mold their views of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a teacher, I honor peoples' diverse perceptions of reality that my participants may hold.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I believe that knowledge is constructed both cognitively and socially and is rooted in one's experiences. Epistemologically, I sought an up-close and personal description of the phenomenon from the participants' experiences. Their knowledge, discovered through interviews, focus groups, and personal journals, provided the subjective stories needed to construct a portrait of the participants, which ultimately informed the research questions used to guide this study.

Axiology

Axiology is the study of values. Especially in educational research, axiological assumptions can impact research direction and, therefore, must be articulated at the onset of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As an educator, I value my students' education and quality of services. Additionally, I value the assistance and strength of paraeducators working with individual students. These values are supported by my belief that students with disabilities

deserve the best possible post-school quality of life. It is my responsibility to facilitate learning toward that goal. Paraeducators are paramount to the education of students with disabilities as they assist in delivering high-quality services to students. Because I recognize that my values can also be biased, I made every effort to bracket my personal thoughts and feelings through the process of epoché (Moustakas, 1994). By suspending my personal beliefs, values, and judgments, I captured an unsullied view of paraeducators' experiences.

Rhetoric

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined qualitative research as "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). One of these key interpretive practices, rhetoric, is the study of writing as a form of persuasive communication (O'Neill, 1998). Rhetorical assumptions influence the final presentation of the study. Within qualitative research, the rhetorical assumption is that the researcher is not "truth-seeking" but rather presenting the reality of the participants (O'Neill 1998). Participants' perspectives of their lived experiences were ascertained through interviews, focus groups, and personal journals. They are then presented in a first-person narrative format using quotes and providing detailed, thick descriptions of their experiences.

Problem Statement

This study sought to illuminate the unique perspectives of one-to-one paraeducators assisting students with disabilities who are served in the self-contained classroom. Previous research indicates that one-to-one paraeducators have historically been assigned to support students with significant behavioral, medical, and/or cognitive challenges (Russel et al., 2015). Yada (2019) purported that paraeducators often impact students' academic success and can influence their motivation to succeed. However, many one-to-one paraeducators have expressed

concern regarding their limited training and unclarity regarding their work-related responsibilities (Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019).

One concern of educational leaders is the lack of research specifically addressing the experience of one-to-one paraeducators (Giangreco et al., 2005; Stewart, 2019). Much of the prior research regarding paraeducators has involved those assigned to support a whole class and most often addresses those who support students with high incidence disabilities (Hendrix et al., 2018; Giangreco et al., 2003; Rodgers et al., 2014). Pajares (2008) linked paraeducators' sense of self-efficacy to student performance with higher-incidence disabilities and has recommended further investigation of this phenomenon pertaining to one-to-one paraeducators. The problem was that the voices of paraeducators who support individual students in the self-contained classroom remained silent. By giving one-to-one paraeducators a voice to share their experiences and describe their job-related self-efficacy, educational leaders may be better equipped to provide professional development support.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. At this stage of the research, one-to-one paraeducators will be defined as an assigned aides to assist facilitation of social interaction, engagement in instruction, and meeting personal needs (Russel et al., 2015). Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory guided this study. Within this theory, Bandura described self-efficacy as one's belief in their ability to complete a task successfully. Furthermore, he suggested that four elements contribute to one's self-efficacy: performance outcomes, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion,

and physiological and affective state (Bandura, 1997b). The experiences of the participants were analyzed through the lens of these sources of self-efficacy.

Significance of the Study

Research from this study, designed to give voice to one-to-one paraeducators working with students with disabilities in the self-contained classroom, added to the understanding of this phenomenon practically, empirically, and theoretically. A discussion of each area of significance and pertinent literature support follows. It is expected that information gleaned from this study will be used to improve the overall experiences of one-to-one paraeducators.

Practically speaking, the result of this study will benefit those supervising one-to-one paraeducators by deepening their understanding of the daily challenges these critical support educators face. This benefit will allow educational leaders to design professional development programs that target the specific needs of one-to-one paraeducators. Ultimately, by enhancing the training that one-to-one paraeducators receive, the students in their care will receive better support in their pursuit of greater achievements. Empirically, the results of this study fill the gap in the literature pertaining to one-to-one paraeducators addressed by several researchers (Gibson et al., 2016; Russel et al., 2015; Sheehey et al., 2018). Furthermore, this research provided critical information needed regarding the best practices of one-to-one paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015; Gibson et al., 2016; Maltz & Seruya, 2018; Russel et al., 2015; Sheehey et al., 2018). Finally, the results of this study added to the theoretical understanding of Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy by applying his principles to an uninvestigated population, one-to-one paraeducators.

Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study was guided by the following central

research and sub-research questions. These questions were designed using Bandura's (1997c)

SCT's sources of self-efficacy. The central research question was constructed to investigate one-

to-one paraeducators' experiences assisting high school students with disabilities in self-

contained. The sub-research questions are designed to investigate the one-to-one paraeducators'

perceptions concerning each of the four sources of self-efficacy individually.

Central Question

*CQ***:** What are the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school

students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms?

One-to-one paraeducators are assigned to individual students who typically have extreme

conative, physical, and/or behavioral needs and are integral to the special education classroom

(Straus & Bondie,2015). Research suggests that paraeducators' self-efficacy impacts student

performance (Mahler et al., 2018; Mok & Moore, 2019; Stewart, 2019). At this time, there is

little research regarding the practices and experience of one-to-one paraeducators (Azad et al.,

2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019). Thus, the purpose of this

question was to ascertain their experiences.

Sub Questions

SQ1: What do one-to-one paraeducators believe about their ability to support students

with disabilities?

According to Bandura (1997a), mastery experiences, meaning the previous successes and

failures one experiences when completing a task, are the strongest influence on self-efficacy.

However, there are gaps in the data regarding paraeducators' performance (Mason et al.,

2019). This question explores what one-to-one paraeducators believe about their job-related self-efficacy to obtain a deeper understanding of their experiences.

SQ2: What do one-to-one paraeducators believe about the ability of their peers to execute the courses of action required to support students with disabilities?

This sub-question investigates the vicarious experiences that influence one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences, which are derived from observing similar social models, can powerfully influence the development of self-efficacy (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Seeing relatable people succeed in comparable situations promotes the observer's belief that they, too, have the capabilities to succeed at comparable activities (Bandura, 1997). Understanding how one-to-one paraeducators view their peers may enlighten my understanding of their experiences.

SQ3: How do one-to-one paraeducators describe the job-related verbal encouragement that they receive from others?

This sub-question explored the job-related verbal persuasion and feedback one-to-one paraeducators receive. Bandura's (1997) third source of self-efficacy, social or verbal persuasion, is considered a less powerful yet still important source of self-efficacy (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Verbal/social persuasion occurs when people are told they do or do not have the ability to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997c). Verbal persuasion, especially from a significant mentor, can influence people to approach the activity with greater effort and fewer self-doubts. Understanding how paraeducators perceive verbal feedback may further enlighten their experiences.

*SQ4***:** How do one-to-one paraeducators describe their moods when reflecting on job-related activities?

The final source of self-efficacy encompasses individuals' physiological and emotional states, often referred to as physiological feedback. These signs of feedback from one's body are often associated with emotional and physical feelings. Physiological feedback, such as excitement, is associated with positive self-efficacy. While physiological feedback, such as stress, can diminish self-efficacy negatively (Bandura, 1997). This question was designed to interpret one-to-one paraeducators' physiological and emotional states concerning their self-efficacy.

Definitions

1. *Self-efficacy* – one's beliefs in their ability to successfully complete a task (Bandura, 1997).

2. *Perception* – beliefs and "experiences that promote goal-related performance accomplishments, which have intrinsic and extrinsic rewards" (Granziera & Perera, 2019, p. 76).

3. *One-to-one Paraeducator* - A paraeducator assigned to one student with a disability for support throughout their school day (Russel et al., 2015) so the student may access their education in a variety of settings (Gibson et al., 2016). Paraeducators are also referred to as paraprofessionals, teacher aides, teaching assistants, or paras (Sheehey et al., 2018).

4. *Classroom Paraeducator* – a paraprofessional, teacher aide, or instructional assistant who assists in supporting all students in a classroom (Giangreco et al., 2003).

5. *Individualized Education Program (IEP)-* a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with section 1414(d) of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 2004.

6. *Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)-* Special education and related services that have:

   been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without

   charge; meet the standards of the State educational agency; include an appropriate

   preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and

   are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required under

   section 1414(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004.

Summary

Chapter one provided the context for the research study to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. The background, including the historical, theoretical, and social context, was presented. Pertinent literature was presented, which pointed to a paucity in the research regarding the perceptions of one-to-one paraeducators' experiences servicing students with low-incidence disabilities. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained special education classrooms. Chapter two explores background literature that has led to the investigation of one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review provides a theoretical understanding of persistence and related literature on one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions of working in high school self-contained special education programs concerning their self-efficacy. This literature's development investigates sources of self-efficacy and paraeducators' perceptions while acknowledging the gap in the literature. First, the theoretical framework that sets a context for the research study will be discussed. The theory that frames this inquiry is Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT), which suggests that the learning process, in this case, the development of one's self-efficacy, takes place through a social and interactive context. Next, a synthesis will be arranged of related literature regarding self-efficacy and one-to-one paraeducators in self-contained special education programs. Finally, the gaps will be identified from the available literature regarding one-to-one paraeducators.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1986) SCT directs this research investigation by focusing on self-efficacy. This chapter presents information about the origin and development of Bandura's (1986) SCT, which serves as a theoretical framework for this study. First, a discussion of the historical context that the SCT has made in educational research studies regarding self-efficacy is explored. Next, the social construct of the SCT and the investigation of the development of human efficacy are discussed, along with how the SCT may potentially further advance the field of special education.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1986) SCT explains human motivation and action with reciprocal causation through the relationship of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. In a triadic relationship, cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors influence human motivation and action. The SCT has several concepts that interplay to understand human thought, behavior, and motivation issues. Concepts that interplay to understand the social cognitive theory include reciprocal determinism, behavioral capability, observational learning, reinforcements, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). This study uses self-efficacy to lead the investigation of one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions.

Historical context

The SCT is traditionally used in psychology, education, and communication research as a theoretical foundation to investigate individuals' experiences and social phenomena. SCT is an extension of Bandura's 1976 social learning theory. Bandura extended the social learning theory into the SCT in 1986 to approach how human behavior is caused by personal, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). The new update to this theory explained that human behavior is influenced by triadic reciprocity. Triadic reciprocal causation is represented by the triangular reciprocal relationship between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors that interact interdependently (Bandura, 1997). Personal influences affect human behavior, depending on positive or negative self-efficacy. Behavioral influences occur based on responses or the consequences they receive. Environmental influences are based on how the individual behaves within his or her setting.

Self-efficacy is deemed an important role in the SCT, but it is not the sole determinant of one's actions (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is the foundation of human agency (Bandura, 2000).

Human agency is the capacity for people to control what they do actively (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy contributes to the SCT as it considers the influences of human agency and builds one's belief in his or her ability to complete a task successfully (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy, also referred to as perceived efficacy, evolves from one's human agency through processing four leading sources: (a) performance outcomes, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) physiological and emotional feedback (Bandura, 1997). These sources interplay to influence one's self-efficacy and are therefore used to guide this study to understand one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy.

Construct of Social Cognitive Theory

SCT takes an agentic perspective, which embraces that individuals are producers of experiences and influence events (Bandura, 2000). The nature of self-efficacy is explained through the SCT, which explains how human agency is influenced by personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). Reinforcement of human agency is motivated by an individual's self-efficacy or perceived capability of performing the task or job. If an individual has high self-efficacy, then he or she is often more optimistic about reaching and completing a goal (Bandura, 1997). However, if someone has low self-efficacy, he or she is more pessimistic and often does not try to reach a goal because the goal is not viewed as attainable (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy influences motivation, which an individual must have to approach a task. Self-efficacy is focal to the mechanisms of human agency.

The SCT suggests triadic reciprocal determinism rather than behavior resulting from just environment or personal influence (Bandura, 1986). In reciprocal determinism, human behavior is influenced by cognitive, environmental, and other personal factors that all operate interactively (Bandura, 1986). The term *determinism* is not intended to predict behavior, but it is used to

understand its source better. Reciprocal determinism aids in understanding behavior, specifically how the four sources influence behaviors directed by self-efficacy. Reciprocal determinism explains how the four sources of self-efficacy, performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional feedback interplay. Performance outcomes refer to the direct experiences that one can master, creating self-belief in the experience, whereas failure would hinder self-belief. Vicarious experiences derive from an individual's observations. The conversation influences the verbal persuasion that one has with influential people. Finally, physiological feedback occurs from one's own emotional and physical influences. The four sources of self-efficacy acknowledge the SCT's components.

Impact on Research

Bandura's (1986) SCT has been foundational for studying educators' perceptions of different aspects of education. This theory has furthered the research literature by integrating the four self-efficacy as mentioned above sources. The four self-efficacy sources create a directional guide for investigating individuals' experiences concerning each source, contributing overall to their self-efficacy.

The SCT is often used in education because it accounts for observational learning and knowledge acquisition through social interactions and experience. These experiences include the concepts of reciprocal determinism, behavioral capability, observational learning, reinforcements, and self-efficacy. All of these concepts support the four sources of self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy supports one's motivations and ownership of his or her goals, resiliency, and performance (Bandura, 2000).

The SCT is often represented in education, focusing on observational learning regarding teachers and students. Observational learning, a part of the SCT, explains how human behavior is

learned by observing a model's performances and consequences (Bandura, 1986), which can be a valuable learning method. By observing other individuals' performance, the learner acquires new behavior patterns (Bandura, 1986). Observational learning is used in education as the students observe the teacher presenting the behavior of solving problems. Bandura (1986) proposed that the concept of observational learning explains vicarious experiences, a source of self-efficacy.

Relation to the Research Topic

Research shows that educators' motivational orientations, such as self-efficacy, are influential predictors of student performance (Maheler et al., 2018; Usher & Pajares, 2008). The investigation of one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy offers an understanding of how the paraeducators' experiences and beliefs in their capabilities influence other variables (Bandura, 1997). To better understand an individual's self-efficacy, it is helpful to investigate the sources. Bandura's (1986) SCT encompasses the investigation of one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions concerning their self-efficacy. The SCT postulates that the relation between beliefs people have about their capabilities, and the outcomes of their efforts influence their behavior. As a result, understanding the SCT has helped to explore the effort and perseverance individuals put into their work. The SCT relates to one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions and self-efficacy, which conceptualized the study's theoretical framework as it explored the participants' sources of self-efficacy.

This exploration is conducted to understand self-efficacy behavior from the four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) to further better understand the field of special education. Through the SCT, Bandura analyzed the interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences on human behavior (Bandura, 1997). This theory fits well in the investigation of functional knowledge throughout education and efficacy. Throughout this

research, the definition of efficacy developed to include the beliefs that one has in his or her

capabilities to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997). This study uses the SCT to investigate the

cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences of one-to-one paraeducators' sources of role-

related perceptions concerning their self-efficacy. Specifically, it investigates the perceptions of

one-to-one paraeducators in high school self-contained special education programs regarding

their work-related self-efficacy.

It is beneficial to understand the determinants that contribute to behaviors in the

workplace because antecedent determinants can be controlled to influence staff experiences and

future actions. The SCT will drive the exploration of the literature in understanding the

perceptions of one-to-one paraeducators concerning their self-efficacy by investigating the

determinants that contribute to their experiences and perceptions. This study focuses on self-

efficacy because Bandura soundly explains that "perceived self-efficacy is an important

contributor to performance accomplishments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 37).

Related Literature

The population of students receiving special education services in the United States has

grown immensely over the past decade (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for

Statistics, 2018). In support of this growth, paraeducators' prevalence continues to grow (Russel

et al., 2015) and today outnumbers the number of special education teachers (Stewart, 2020).

Paraeducators fill a critical role in special education by assisting teachers and students in the

classroom, but current research suggests there are still concerns about their practices (Giangreco,

2010).

The point of this literature review is to focus on the available research regarding

paraeducators in special education. There is a dearth of research regarding one-to-one

paraeducators (Hendrix et al., 2018; Giangreco et al., 2003; Rodgers et al., 2014). Therefore, this literature review provides information regarding classroom paraeducators to provide insight into one-to-one paraeducators' experiences. This literature review also investigates the sources of self-efficacy concerning paraeducators and the concerns that occur when paraeducators are not supported or managed properly (Giangreco et al., 2005). Because one-to-one paraeducators are becoming more prominent in education, professionals should be familiar with strategies for supporting their paraeducators. In order to support one-to-one paraeducators and best practices, a phenomenological study will be conducted to describe one-to-one paraeducators' work-related self-efficacy. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study will provide evidence-based knowledge to educational stakeholders when making decisions. This study aims to understand one-to-one paraeducators and self-efficacy, which can directly impact student success (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Paraeducators: Classroom & One-to-One Paraeducators

P*araeducator* is a term that is often synonymous with teacher's aide, teaching assistant, or paraprofessional (Giangreco et al., 2003; Sheehey et al., 2018). The National Education Association (2015) defines paraeducators as "a school employee who works alongside and under the supervision of a licensed or certificated educator to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to children, youth, and their families." There are generally two types of paraeducators in education: classroom paraeducators and one-to-one paraeducators. Classroom paraeducators are assigned to a classroom to support all students and the teacher in daily classroom needs and academic support. One-to-one paraeducators are often assigned to support one student who presents significant challenges (Stewart, 2019).

The most relevant research regarding classroom paraeducators is investigated to provide insight into one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy. This was done because there is an evident gap in research regarding one-to-one paraeducators (Giangreco et al., 2003; Hendrix et al., 2018; Rodgers et al., 2014). Even with a gap in research, the population of both paraeducators and one-to-one paraeducators continues to grow and now outnumbers special education teachers (Stewart, 2019). Current research regarding paraeducators "has been dominated by an examination of roles and responsibilities, and a focus on orientation and training with no consensus on what is appropriate" (Tews & Lupart, 2008). There is a significant amount of research regarding paraeducators assisting in general education classes to promote inclusion (Douglas et al., 2016; Downing et al., 2000; Ghere & York-Barre, 2007; Giangreco et al., 2006). Research regarding paraeducators has helped make important improvements in the field, but there are still challenges that have not been addressed because of functionality (Brock et al., 2020).

Why One-to-One Paraeducators?

A one-to-one paraeducator is assigned to support students in accessing their LRE, which looks different for each student. A one-to-one paraeducator is assigned to a student, not a whole classroom of students, to facilitate social interaction, engagement in instruction, and meeting personal needs (Russel et al., 2015). One-to-one paraeducators are implemented to (1) provide instruction in academic subjects, (2) support students with challenging behaviors, (3) provide personal care, (4) facilitate peer interaction, and (5) collect and manage data (Tews & Lupart, 2008). These tasks look different for each student and one-to-one paraeducator, as each student has different needs to access his or her education appropriately. While actively providing these supports, one-to-one paraeducators spend most of the school day with their assigned student. Research demonstrates that students perceive their one-to-one paraeducators as consistent with

the following relationship styles: mother, friend, protector, and primary teacher (Tews & Lupart, 2008). The participating students in research studies suggested positive experiences with their one-to-one paraeducators (Tews & Lupart, 2008). Still, some researchers share how a paraeducator-student relationship can also have negative implications if the student perceives the paraeducator as a mother or friend (Giangreco et al., 2005; Tews & Lupart, 2008).

A national trend shows that many students with severe disabilities receive most of their school-based services from a one-to-one paraeducator (Azad et al., 2015). One-to-one paraeducators are often assigned to support a student's overall program, but little research focuses specifically on one-to-one paraeducators delivering these supports (Russel et al., 2015). Some students are pushed into inclusive classrooms and receive one-to-one paraeducators, but many of those paraeducators have improper or no training before entering the classroom (Douglas et al., 2016). This insufficient preparation has led to paraeducators experiencing isolation and anxiety (Downing et al., 2000).

One-to-one paraeducators represent one of the fastest-growing staff in special education (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012) for various reasons. Research indicates that the rapid increase in one-to-one paraeducators has resulted from the "(a) pressure from parents, (b) demands from general education teachers, (c) special education teachers' increasing caseloads, (d) the perception that the use of one-to-one assistants [paraeducators] is cost effective" (Azad et al., 2015, p. 338). When considering the need for a student to receive one-to-one paraeducator services, the determination is based on the students' needs in the Least Restrictive Environment. It is based on access to services that are a part of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) (Etscheidt, 2005) because the IDEA requires students' unique needs to be met [20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)].

While there is a generalized definition of paraeducators, research shows that there is still controversy regarding the responsibilities of a one-to-one paraeducator (Sheehey et al., 2018). One-to-one paraeducators' roles and responsibilities have expanded over the past 15 years but often include instruction, implementation of behavior management plans, and collecting data (Sheehey et al., 2018). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and the IDEA of 2004 pushed state-level education to establish training to support the growing number of one-to-one paraeducators. However, role ambiguity is common among one-to-one paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015). Researchers still label one-to-one paraeducators as a new area of study (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012).

Paraeducator History

Paraeducators became historically relevant in education around the mid-1950s when a need arose to address post-World War II shortages of licensed teachers and to address parents' efforts to develop community-based services for children and adults with disabilities (Pickett et al., 2003). In the early 1970s, a greater number of paraeducators transferred from clerical work to be in the classroom. Educational needs stimulated interest in the employment of paraeducators, who were referred to as *teacher aides*. Research regarding paraeducators' roles began to appear in literature in the 1990s (Nevin et al., 2008). Historically, paraeducators have become more relevant in classrooms and special education. Therefore, laws have developed, such as PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now called the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (2004), and the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), now referred to as the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).

Laws and Paraeducator Requirements

There are federal laws that give states and school districts guidance regarding paraeducators. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 first introduced paraeducators' requirements (Trautman, 2004). The requirements to be a paraeducator were reiterated in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. It stated that paraeducators must attain one of the following "(a) high school or equivalent degree and (b) either a minimum of 2 years at an institute of higher education, an associate degree, or a passing score on a reading, writing, and mathematics assessment" (Stewart, 2019, p. 52).

The reauthorization of IDEA of 1997 required that "paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised… be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities" (20 U.S.C § 1412 (a)(15)(B)(iii). IDEA 1997 was the first time paraeducators were included in the language of Federal legislation (Shyman, 2010). IDEA of 1997 is now maintained through the current law IDEA 2004. Paraeducators are used in a variety of ways. Paraeducators are often defined as staff members who work "under the supervision of licensed professionals (through the school district or an outside behavioral health agency) to deliver direct services to students with special health care needs" (Azad et al., 2015, p. 337). This definition explains that a certified teacher should supervise paraeducators. The certificated teacher is legally obligated to create and train paraeducators in supporting instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). While federal law allows paraeducators to deliver instruction, it does not delineate how they should appropriately do so. IDEA 2004 Part B states that children and youth with disabilities ages 3 through 21 receive special education and related services (Sheehey et al., 2018); therefore, paraeducators work with students in this age bracket.

Roles and Responsibilities

Research regarding paraeducators is dominated by the investigation of paraeducators' roles and responsibilities, but there has been no consensus on appropriate roles and responsibilities across the board (Tews & Lupart, 2008). In 2005, a research study demonstrated that paraeducators spent 47% of their time delivering instruction, 19% of their time providing behavior support, 17% of their time in self-directed activities, and 7% of their time supervising students (Giangreco & Broer, 2005). Paraeducators also assist teachers in "implementing instruction, adapting lesson materials, and providing behavioral support to students with disabilities" (Stewart, 2019, p. 520). Paraeducators' responsibilities are unique to their assigned classroom, teacher, or student. For example, suppose a classroom paraeducator goes to Physical Education (PE) with the students. In that case, they may help students' movement, keep students on task, or rephrase directions to students (Miller et al., 2019). A paraeducator may help students demonstrate their knowledge by being a note-taker for a student with a hearing impairment or translator (Nevin et al., 2008).

Professionals have described paraeducators' work environment as unrealistic, burdensome (Bryan & McCubbin, 2013), underappreciated, and under-compensated, along with the expectation to undertake critical responsibilities without role clarification (Giangreco et al., 2003). Paraeducators are said to work with students who have the most needs, educationally, behaviorally, and medically (Miller et al., 2019). While paraeducators' roles differ between classrooms, their responsibilities seem unclear to educators nationally. Along with these descriptions comes the discovery that one-to-one paraeducators educate society's highly impacted students but have little to no training (Bryan & McCubbin, 2013; Giangreco et al., 2003).

The roles and responsibilities of paraeducators still seem unclear to many, including paraeducators and teachers. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has developed a specialty compilation of knowledge and skills for a successful paraeducator. This compilation is called the Paraeducator Common Core Guidelines (PCCG) (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015). The PCCG includes the following standards: (a) Learner development and individual learning differences, (b) Learning Environments, (c) Curricular Content Knowledge, (d) Assessment, (e) Instructional Planning and Strategies, (f) Professional Learning and Ethical Practice (g) Collaboration (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015). CEC created the PCCG to identify the knowledge and skills that paraeducators should have when working with students with disabilities. These standards were created considering research-based practices and in response to research that suggested concerns regarding previous paraeducator research.

Unique Roles and Responsibilities of One-to-One Paraeducators

One-to-one paraeducators' responsibilities can include student personal care, medical care, literacy instruction, social skills instruction, community-based instruction, and clerical or noninstructional support (Carter et al., 2009). One-to-one paraeducators may also be translators for children who speak a language other than English, behavioral aides for a student, note-taker in general education classes, or speech-language assistants (Nevin et al., 2009). It is common practice for a one-to-one paraeducator to be placed with a student who has a severe disability, especially if the student is in inclusive classes throughout the general education population (Russel et al., 2015). While one-to-one paraeducators often work with students with severe disabilities, there is research throughout the health disciplines, such as occupational therapy and speech therapy. Still, most of the research regarding one-to-one paraeducators is limited to education (Azad et al., 2015).

One-to-one paraeducators' roles and responsibilities have expanded over the past 15 years, including instruction, implementing behavior management plans, and collecting data (Sheehey et al., 2018). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and the IDEA of 2004 responded with a state-responsible education training to support the growing number of one-to-one paraeducators. Nevertheless, it is still common to see role ambiguity among one-to-one paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015, p. 338). Supports would be helpful to one-to-one paraeducators to promote efficacy in their work. Positive efficacy would promote the "quality of education services for children and youth with exceptionalities [which] resides in the abilities, qualifications, and competencies of the personnel who provide the services" (Carter et al., 2009, p. 344).

Training and Preparation of Paraeducators

While research literature is moving positively, there are still challenges in the field that have not yet been addressed. Existing literature addressing paraeducator training focuses on implementing an intervention in one context with one student but does not generalize the practice of implementation with other students (Brock et al., 2020). Many school districts have not embraced research-based approaches when training paraeducators because of the lack of feasibility (Brock et al., 2020; Carter et al., 2009).

Paraeducators' knowledge is important because their support can impact students' success (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Stewart, 2019; Usher & Pajares, 2008). Students with severe disabilities are at high risk for poor outcomes and limited self-determination (Brock et al., 2020). When trained and supported well, Paraeducators are a crucial asset to students' educational success (Douglas et al., 2016; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2003). Researchers have found that when paraeducators are not trained, not supported, and not implemented well

into a student's program, they may hinder student success (Douglas et al., 2016; Giangreco et al., 2003; Stewart, 2019). Interviews from a qualitative research study described some paraeducators who received no previous training before working with students with Autism (Bertuccio et al., 2019). Other paraeducators used a trial-and-error method with the students because they had no training explaining best practices (Bertuccio et al., 2019).

Research-based practices are evidence-based best practices that have been found to improve student outcomes. Evidence-based and ethically sound practices must be used in the classroom as mandated by federal law in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015-2016). Paraeducators are more successful when trained to provide these evidence-based practices than when tasked with providing general support (Brock et al., 2020). Many studies have been published focusing on training paraeducators to implement interventions for students with disabilities.

Supervision of Paraeducators

Paraeducators serve in the education field in many different and varied ways. Paraeducators are often assigned, under a teacher's guidance, as classroom support or as support to one student (Douglas et al., 2015). Teachers directly manage paraeducators, but paraeducators often receive little training for their role (Douglas et al., 2015). For example, paraeducators have expressed that they are overwhelmed and do not feel that they can effectively work with students who have severe disabilities because they do not have adequate training (Douglas et al., 2016; Brock et al., 2017). Often, multiple paraeducators work under the supervision of teachers (Brock et al., 2020).

Teachers are often paraeducators' primary supervisors and leaders in their daily activities. While teachers can lack training in supervising adults, they often do not fully understand

paraeducators' rules and responsibilities, which leads to a problem when leading a team of paraeducators (Jones et al., 2011). Once teachers better understand paraeducators' rules and responsibilities, they can lead paraeducators through applicable professional development, team collaboration, and positive experiences (Jones et al., 2011).

Paraeducators are often assigned to a teacher, who is their direct supervisor and evaluator. Although teachers directly supervise paraeducators in their classrooms, they rarely receive direction in supervising adults (Biggs et al., 2019). Teacher pre-service programs focus on training teachers on how to manage students; therefore, they receive little direction related to the responsibilities of managing adults (Biggs et al., 2019). This little direction has led to teachers reporting they are inadequately trained to manage paraeducators and do not feel confident in doing so (Douglas et al., 2016). This feeling of low confidence creates a work environment where the leader does not feel confident doing his or her job, exhibiting low self-efficacy and impacting team dynamics (Bandura, 2000).

One-to-one paraeducators are often assigned to students in self-contained special education programs (Giangreco et al., 2005); therefore, special education teachers often manage them. Self-contained programs include students who usually have significant cognitive impairments, receive specially designed special education services, and are eligible for alternative state assessments (Lyons et al., 2016). In self-contained special education programs, paraeducators work with a special education teacher in the same assigned classroom (Giangreco et al., 2005). In many self-contained classes, one to two classroom paraeducators often support teachers by providing lesson support, gathering materials, and overall classroom support (Azad et al., 2015). Along with the classroom teacher, there may be one or more one-to-one paraeducators depending on the students' needs in the classroom. Self-contained special

education programs often have more one-to-one paraeducators because the program has more students with severe disabilities, to whom of which one-to-one paraeducators are often assigned (Russel et al., 2015). Although a student may be assigned to a self-contained classroom, that student may have general education or other special education classes. The one-to-one paraeducator may travel alongside that student (Douglas et al., 2016). When a one-to-one paraeducator is in a general education classroom, the paraeducator may assist in providing accommodations and modifications that help the student meet that class's expectations and may collaborate with the general education teacher to co-teach (Cipriano et al., 2016).

Perspectives of Paraeducators

Paraeducators' perceptions have been scarcely investigated in the field of education. Paraeducators often enter the field because they want to help children, which can be rewarding, but they quickly experience the weight of being in a caregiving and teaching role. Many perceptions of paraeducators are related to their roles and responsibilities. For example, one-to-one paraeducators' roles include working with students who have severe needs, medically, or behaviorally (Russel et al., 2015). Teachers and paraeducators have both expressed feeling inadequate when responding to these students (Hendrix et al., 2018). One-to-one paraeducators often spend more time with their students than the general or special education teacher spends with those students (Giangreco, 2010), leaving the paraeducator in a state of emotional exhaustion.

When focusing on paraeducators' perceptions, many have reported: that "salient factors in paraeducator job satisfaction were respect from colleagues, acknowledgment of their opinions about students, active team membership, and the existence of a collaborative team culture within the school" (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012, p. 288). This feedback aids in understanding

paraeducators' perceptions concerning their self-efficacy. The factors of job satisfaction above all suggest the importance of performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experiences. These perceptions can lead to the physiological feedback that ultimately can persuade paraeducators to leave the field.

In the realm of educational research, there is an acknowledgment of controversy in implementing paraeducators, especially one-to-one paraeducators (Doyle, 2008; Giangreco et al., 2010; Sheehey et at., 2018). Although there is controversy, there is a substantial amount of recognition that paraeducators are beneficial to student programs and "play a prominent role" (Sheehey et al., 2018, p. 44). These perspectives of paraeducators have led to the investigation of proper training. When investigating this controversy, professionals, teachers, and paraeducators all suggest that paraeducators need more training or they may experience more job stressors (Giangreco et al., 2010; Hendrix et al., 2018; Sheehey et al., 2018). As staff communicates job stressors, there can be a correlation to join burnout (Hendrix et al., 2018).

Burnout of Paraeducators

While the burnout rate of paraeducators is often explained by the concerns related to paraeducator employment, there are several components of their role that have been addressed by researchers. Burnout is defined as when an "educator's emotional energy is drained and the educator does not feel like he or she is emotionally capable to deal with a situation" (Barnes et al., 2018). Paraeducator employment has been described as a "revolving door" (Ghere & York-Barre, 2007, p. 21) because of inadequate salary, lack of support and training, career accomplishments, and their role in the school hierarchy (Ghere & York-Barre, 2007; Shyman, 2010).

The burnout rate of paraeducators varies from district to district. Still, researchers have found a pattern of concerns when investigating several districts as to why the paraeducators left the field. The burnout of paraeducators is consistent with the predictors of occupational stress, such as job demand, role conflict, sense of self-efficacy, and perceived supervisor support (Shyman, 2010). Job demand in education often includes the toll of cognitive demand of being emotionally attached to students, especially for one-to-one paraeducators with their students (Shyman, 2010). Role conflict is a significant factor in paraeducators' emotional exhaustion, especially when there are unclear roles and responsibilities (Shyman, 2010). An individual's sense of self-efficacy is influenced by performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological feedback (Bandura, 1994). These sources of self-efficacy are significantly impacted by the concerns shared by paraeducators' perceptions. Perceived supervisor support is impacted by having supervisors who do not have a strong understanding of the staff's roles and responsibilities.

Stakeholders' Opinions of Paraeducators

Stakeholders may hold different titles in different districts, but overall, stakeholders are advocates that gather to improve outcomes (RMC Research Corporation, 2009). Understanding stakeholders' perceptions of paraeducators are important to acknowledge because the stakeholders are the leaders who promote success. If stakeholders believe that there is potential for improvement, then they can advocate for that improvement to be made. There are internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders work within the school system regularly, for example, students, teachers, paraeducators, and principals. External stakeholders include those who work outside the school days but with a strong interest in school outcomes. External stakeholders still play a critical role in education because they help sustain improved

outcomes (RMC Research Corporation, 2009). One powerful method to involve stakeholders is to provide them with data regarding the situation at stake (RMC Research Corporation, 2009).

Stakeholders in education must understand the evidence-based research behind their decisions. Understanding evidence-based research can be challenging when even research offers conflicting information about the positives and negatives of one-to-one paraeducators (Giangreco et al., 2005). The data presented to stakeholders has conflict. Most research addresses teachers as stakeholders of interest. It is established that teachers' self-efficacy can impact student performance (Wheatley 2002); therefore, it is important that stakeholders also know more about paraeducators' self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy

It should be reiterated that self-efficacy is a significant component of the social cognitive theory, but it "is not the sole determinant" of human agency (Bandura, 1997, p. vii). Bandura refers to self-efficacy as one's belief in his or her ability to successfully complete a task (Bandura, 1997). Literature regarding self-efficacy is investigated because of the valuable lens it provides regarding student learning. Educational research from recent decades has shown a positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy and instructional behavior, including, but not limited to, student engagement, student motivation, student achievement, and student self-efficacy (Mo Ching Mok & Moore, 2019). Self-efficacy has been used to predict students' academic achievement throughout different academic content and levels (Usher & Pajares, 2008). When investigating individuals' perceptions, it is important to acknowledge "the diversity of human capabilities" (Bandura, 1997, p. 36), as efficacy beliefs differ between activities or jobs. Efficacy is a predictor of the performance attainments and goals that people set for

themselves (Bandura, 1997), which is important for one-to-one paraeducators as they are assigned to support students.

Many different variables determine self-efficacy, but Bandura (1986) has explained how those variables fit into four determining sources that contribute to one's self-efficacy. The four sources are performance outcomes (also referred to as mastery experiences), vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and physiological feedback (Bandura,1997). Some of these four sources contribute more powerfully to self-efficacy, but they all contribute to one's overall self-efficacy in their unique ways. The sources of self-efficacy help to understand individuals and why they have confidence, how long they pursue through difficulties, how anxiety will affect them, and their awareness of their accomplishments (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018).

Self-efficacy in classroom paraeducators has been briefly researched to understand their perceptions regarding their workplace (Barnes et al., 2018; Brock et al., 2020; Downing et al., 2000; Gibson et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Matlz & Seruya, 2018). Still, one-to-one paraeducators have been overlooked in research, partially because there are more classroom paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015). Paraeducators' perceptions have been studied over the past decade, but little information regarding one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy explains the four sources (Russel et al., 2015).

Research regarding paraeducators from the past decade has focused on paraeducators' needs, specifically their roles and responsibilities (Giangreco et al., 2003; Stewart, 2019), but there is little regarding their work-related self-efficacy. Paraeducators' roles and responsibilities are often unclear; therefore, teachers have difficulty understanding how paraeducators fit into classrooms. Unclear roles and responsibilities can affect classroom management, paraeducator support, and student behavior (Gibson et al., 2016). Research lacks in how one-to-one

paraeducators' performance, interaction with others, and feelings have impacted their self-efficacy. These sources of information would help contribute to the knowledge of professionals to support paraeducators and students.

Performance Outcomes

Performance outcome is the most influential source of self-efficacy because it is established from "authentic mastery experiences" (Bandura, 1986, p. 399). Performance outcomes are also referred to as mastery experiences or enactive learning experiences. Authentic and first-hand experiences are the most relatable and meaningful experiences because they belong to an individual. Successful direct experiences positively impact one's self-efficacy. Negative direct experiences impact one's self-efficacy negatively. As individuals have more positive or negative performance outcomes, their self-efficacy is influenced; it begins to direct the individual's judgment of their capabilities. Based on Bandura and Locke (2003), self-efficacy is instrumental in predicting performance.

Literature suggests that performance outcomes have the most impact on an individual's self-efficacy (Chen & Usher, 2013; Klassen, 2004; Lopex & Lent, 1992). Britner and Pajares (2006) discovered that performance outcomes significantly predicted an individual's self-efficacy in their US sample. However, no studies have considered a relationship among the four sources or the indirect effects of four sources on self-efficacy (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018).

Performance Outcomes in the Workplace. Employers in many industries investigate self-efficacy to empower their work teams. Self-efficacy perceptions and self-leadership behaviors have been investigated concerning employee performance outcomes (Prussia et al., 1998). It was found that leadership performance behaviors affect others' self-efficacy, but no research examined whether self-leadership behaviors influence self-efficacy (Prussia et al.,

1998). A negative impact on performance outcomes may derive from job ambiguity, a problem that is common in paraeducator research (Stewart, 2019). Self-efficacy has an "impact on cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes" (Bandura, 2006, p. 5). These processes can be used as information to make goals and reflect upon life skills, guiding individuals to a more positive self-efficacy. When individuals demonstrate positive self-efficacy, they are more likely to be successful in their workplace because they are optimistic and motivated to reach their goals, creating ownership of their work. The ownership is because "efficacy beliefs are concerned not only with the exercise of control over action but also with the self-regulation of thought processes, motivation, and affective and physiological states" (Bandura, 1997, p.36).

Performance Outcomes in Education. Literature about performance outcomes in education is primarily about students' and teachers' efficacy (Bautista, 2011; Burchard & Myers, 2019; Busch et al., 1998; Shiperd, 2019; Wang et al., 2013). Performance outcomes have been very influential in the field of education. Self-efficacy is influenced by performance outcomes that have occurred once or over time (Bandura, 1997), meaning that if someone had one bad experience with a scenario, then it can impact his or her efficacy. If someone has several good experiences, then it can positively impact his or her self-efficacy. These experiences may occur as a student has repeated success in a class (Phan & Ngu, 2016) or a one-to-one paraeducator has repeated success working with the student. With decades of research promoting a positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student performance (Koniewski, 2019), it is evident that learners need strong teachers and adults in their classrooms. Educators' awareness of their self-efficacy can benefit the impact they make on students.

Performance Outcomes and One-To-One Paraeducators. It is reiterated that there is a gap in the literature regarding one-to-one paraeducators. Even fewer studies about one-to-one paraeducators' efficacy are sourced from their performance outcomes. Self-efficacy is important because one-to-one paraeducators spend the school day with students; therefore, they significantly impact their one-to-one assigned student's education. The literature describes that paraeducators are members of educational teams, but they receive little attention in the literature; it was not until the 1990s and early 2000s that new laws sparked new research (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). The growing research focused on paraeducators supporting inclusive practices, leaving out one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions of work-related efficacy. In supporting students with one-to-one paraeducators, the educational system, including school districts, must support their employees, teachers, and paraeducators. To better a district's understanding of special education, self-efficacy is crucial in the "pursuit of innovation and excellence" (Tierney & Farmer, 2011, p. 277).

Insufficient preparation has led to paraeducators' physiological feedback presenting isolation and anxiety, affecting their performance outcomes and overall self-efficacy (Downing et al., 2000). There are more paraeducators than special education teachers in public schools (Brock et al., 2017). The number of paraeducators continues to rise, but the research is still limited.

Vicarious Experiences

Self-efficacy is influenced by vicarious experiences that contribute as a model to the learner. Learning through a model is explained in detail within the social cognitive theory but expanded to explain self-efficacy. When people compare themselves with a model they have observed and experienced, they contribute a vicarious experience to their sense of self-efficacy.

People tend to compare themselves through vicarious experiences when they try to measure themselves on a task that has no scale, such as "whether one can swim, fly an aircraft, or balance a checkbook" (Bandura, 1997, p. 86). Bandura (1997) explained that "when adequacy must be gauged largely in relation to the performance of others, social comparison operates as a primary factor in the self-appraisal of capabilities" (p. 87). Vicarious experience works as an individual sees similar individuals perform successes, and it then raises their self-efficacy in believing that they too can accomplish the task. In contrast, vicarious experience works as individuals see similar individuals fail, and it then lowers their self-efficacy in believing that they may also fail.

When investigating the knowns and unknowns of vicarious experiences, there is less literature regarding vicarious experiences than performance outcomes concerning one's self-efficacy (Clark & Newberry, 2019). Research regarding vicarious experiences and other sources of self-efficacy has been investigated using open-ended questions, Likert style scales, and semi-structured interviews. Individuals often develop their self-efficacy through vicarious experiences when they have less experience (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018). Arslan (2012), Phan (2012), and Usher and Pajares (2006) found that vicarious experience, along with performance outcome and physiological feedback, are all significant predictors of self-efficacy. Some literature focuses more on specific sources of self-efficacy. However, most literature suggests that the four sources of self-efficacy from the social cognitive theory are all significant or important in their own ways.

Vicarious Experiences in the Workplace. Vicarious experiences occur in the workplace through many social situations. Vicarious experience, often referred to as modeling, provides more than a social standard; it reveals behavior to understand predictability and controllability (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) explained the importance of predictability and controllability

in that predictability "reduces stress and increases preparedness for coping with threats" (p. 88), and in controllability, "the model demonstrates highly effective strategies for handling threats" (p. 88). Both predictability and controllability model one's experience before they experience a situation themselves.

Vicarious Experiences in Education. Modeling is often presented to educational staff through training to observe the skills (Garvis, 2011). Few studies investigate the efficacy of paraeducators' after implementing new training procedures or educational practices for working with students who have disabilities (Brock et al., 2017). The lack of investigation is alarming to researchers as paraeducators outnumber special education teachers in public schools, yet there is little investigation regarding their efficacy before and after training (Brock et al., 2017). It seems that most studies that implemented paraeducator training to determine the effects on students included one-to-one coaching with frequent performance feedback (Brock et al., 2017), which is difficult to implement nationwide based on budgets and time. Researchers of one-to-one paraeducators and classroom paraeducators almost always promote the need for further training and research at the end of their research discussion (Douglas et al., 2016; Ledford et al., 2017; Sheehey et al., 2018). Many studies that investigate paraeducators' self-efficacy use Likert-style rating scales (Koniewski, 2019; Yada et al., 2019), limiting their ability to share through stories and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Some studies have implemented different types of training for paraeducators to promote the paraeducators' use of evidence-based strategies (Shyman, 2010; Stewart, 2019). Researchers have reviewed student growth related to paraeducators' perceptions after implementing training programs to find if the training program was helpful and encouraged positive interaction with students (Ledford et al., 2018). The training programs have become a positive performance

outcome for paraeducators and provide hope as research continues to provide training and coaching programs.

       Vicarious Experiences and One-to-One Paraeducators. The number of one-to-one paraeducators included in the training studies is unknown. It is also unknown if the one-to-one paraeducators' perspectives differ from classroom paraeducators. Paraeducators nationwide have different education requirements (Cockcroft et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2012). Still, a trend in research suggests that one-to-one paraeducators and paraeducators want and need training and resources that apply to their jobs (Cockcroft et al., 2002). Gibson et al., (2016) have collected and narrowed paraeducators' needs into the following themes including, but not limited to, "(a) inclusion in the school community, (b) curriculum, (c) classroom management, and (d) student support" (p. 1). Along with ensuring appropriate training and evaluation and asking paraeducators their recommendations for training in their field, paraeducators' needs are key to positive self-efficacy. (Douglas et al., 2016). Paraeducators often need training, and much of the time, they want the training (Kim et al., 2017). However, education is still at the beginning stages of implementing proper and effective training.

Verbal Persuasion

       Verbal persuasion occurs every day through social interaction. Like vicarious experience, verbal persuasion depends on the "trustworthiness, credibility, and expertise of the person providing the persuasion" (Clark & Newberry, 2019). Verbal persuasion describes the impact that words can have on someone's self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) explains as someone is persuaded verbally "that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks [and] are likely to mobilize greater sustained effort than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulties arise" (p. 400). Verbal persuasion can be more powerful when it

comes from someone significant and within realistic bounds (Bandura, 1997). As someone is verbally persuaded that they could accomplish a task, their self-efficacy may be promoted positively.

In contrast, if someone is verbally persuaded that something is too difficult, their self-efficacy is negatively influenced. Verbal persuasion alone may not significantly increase an individual's self-efficacy, but it may create enduring positive or negative self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Verbal persuasion works with other mixed experiences to promote self-efficacy.

Verbal Persuasion in the Workplace. The awareness of self-efficacy in the workplace allows staff to take ownership of their own perceptions. When individuals are prompted to acknowledge and reflect upon their self-awareness, they can reflect upon their self-efficacy beliefs in life. When individuals are made aware of their self-efficacy and its contributing sources through feedback, they are more likely to be motivated toward life accomplishments (Bandura, 2008). One-to-one paraeducators may be made aware of their self-efficacy from the feedback they may receive from teachers, students, or other paraeducators, just as "feedback from classmates or other teachers is an especially strong source of self-efficacy for beginning teachers" (Clark & Newberry, 2019) or paraeducators.

Verbal Persuasion in Education. It is known that verbal persuasion can influence someone's psychological and behavioral responses (Lamarche et al., 2014), which are two powerful responses for educators. Education literature directly about verbal persuasion is primarily about students' and teachers' efficacy (Clark & Newberry, 2019; Hagen et al., 1998). When promoting persuasive verbal influences in an educator, their self-efficacy improves (Hagen et al., 1998). Little educational literature directly addresses paraeducators and one-to-one paraeducators' verbal persuasive sources concerning self-efficacy. Although through

investigating literature regarding paraeducators' and one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions and efficacy, some information is embedded in previous studies that can suggest the verbal persuasion that one-to-one paraeducators receive in relation to their self-efficacy.

Verbal Persuasion and One-to-One Paraeducators. Verbal persuasion does not have to be directly related to a single person but may be directed at a group of people (Arslan, 2013), such as one-to-one paraeducators. Because the benefits of one-to-one paraeducators are still under controversy (Sheehey et al., 2018), they receive mixed verbal persuasion that their work may be harming a student's success. This mixed verbal persuasion is often because of paraeducators' limited training and education (Brock et al., 2017; Douglas et al., 2016). Therefore, this verbal persuasion may impact the paraeducators' perception of the work they are doing. Although there is controversy, most of the literature acknowledges the benefits of paraeducators' assistance in special education when implemented well (Sheehey et al., 2018). When someone is verbally persuaded that they are not doing a good job because they have no training, it can either motivate someone with high self-efficacy to do better or discourage someone with low self-efficacy from trying (Bandura, 1997). When educators have low self-efficacy and are discouraged, it may impact student performance (Koniewski, 2019; Stewart, 2019; Yada et al., 2019).

One-to-one paraeducators' assignments are somewhat controversial because some professionals share that a one-to-one paraeducator is more likely to "reduce pupils' independence through supplying answers; they are also prone to giving inaccurate or misleading information, albeit unintentionally" (Radford et al., 2015, p. 1). Some researchers suggest that paraeducators are more likely to ask lower quality questions and unintentionally reduce students' independence (Radford et al., 2015). They share this is because of their basic knowledge regarding special

education's evidence-based practices. This feedback from professionals serves as a verbal persuasion source of one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy.

Students have perceived their one-to-one paraeducators as consistent with the following relationship styles: mother, friend, protector, and primary teacher (Tews & Lupart, 2008). All the studied students suggested positive experiences with their one-to-one paraeducators. Still, some researchers have explained, with reasoning to persuade, that a paraeducator-student relationship can also have negative implications if the student perceives them as a mother or friend (Tews & Lupart, 2008). These researchers have suggested that students may not experience the same rich learning environment if they feel that their one-to-one paraeducator is like their mother or friend.

Paraeducators spend most of the day with their students, including making decisions that directly influence their daily program (Shyman, 2010). When paraeducators were interviewed at the end of training programs, they shared informative input and wished they were more involved in the shared decision-making for the students they work with (Hendrix, 2018). For example, when a paraeducator is interviewed or simply conversed with, they have helpful feedback that would benefit the students' Individual Education Program (IEP) or behavior plan (Ledford et al., 2017).

Physiological Feedback

Self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors are influenced by physiological feedback, such as anxiety, stress, fatigue, and mood (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Learners "interpret their physiological arousal as an indicator of personal competence by evaluating their own performances under differing conditions" (Usher & Pajares, 2008, p. 754). Physiological feedback can feel immediate and "usually debilitates performance" (Bandura, 1986, p. 401). Individuals are more likely to feel a higher sense of self-efficacy when they do not exhibit these

physiological feedback symptoms. Although anxiety, stress, fatigue, and mood are often recognized with physiological feedback, individuals are not limited to feeling autonomic arousal symptoms (Bandura, 1986). Other physiological feedback regarding strength and stamina has been described as fatigue or pain, indicating physical inefficacy (Bandura, 1986).

  Physiological Feedback in the Workplace. Research promotes health and well-being in the workplace as priorities in promoting self-efficacy—self-efficacy being one of the most important personal resources in the work context (Loeb et al., 2016). Self-efficacy is positively related to job satisfaction and commitment, and both tell a lot about an educator's motivation and ownership of his or her attitude and achievement. Once recognized, "efficacy beliefs regulate aspirations, choice of behavioral course, mobilization and maintenance of effort, and affective reactions" (Bandura, 1997, p. 4). These efficacy beliefs can be beneficial for school district leaders to recognize in themselves and their paraeducators.

  Physiological Feedback in Education. Educators and students have all experienced physiological feedback in education, whether it has been associated with happiness and excitement or nervousness and anxiety. Physiological feedback is a typical response for everyone, especially when presented with challenges. Educators and paraeducators in self-contained special education programs teach students who have the most needs cognitively, behaviorally, and medically (Miller et al., 2019). Teachers report inadequate training in supervising and supporting paraeducators to work with students who have special needs (Douglas et al., 2016). When an individual is presented with a challenging event, and no support, the feeling of inadequacy establishes physiological feedback, such as stress or anxiety, which pushes the individual toward low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Physiological Feedback and One-to-One Paraeducators. One-to-one paraeducators experience physiological feedback throughout their workday. The physiological feedback that paraeducators experience comes from a variety of sources. For example, paraeducators have felt discomfort when the student they are helping is not welcomed or supported in a classroom (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007). Levels of emotional exhaustion have proven to be an indicator of paraeducators' self-efficacy (Shyman, 2010). Between 30% and 40% of teachers leave the field in their first five years because of emotional exhaustion, and researchers suggest that this may be an implicit threat for paraeducators (Shyman, 2019). Emotional exhaustion or high rates of occupational stress can lead to the development of "serious physical conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers, among other serious diseases" (Shyman, 2010, p. 829). Few studies have focused on the self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators concerning their physiological feedback. However, when examining the literature, there is evidence that physiological feedback was taken into consideration when interviewing participants regarding paraeducators and self-efficacy. Many studies have focused on paraeducators' roles and responsibilities from different sources (Carroll, 2001; Downing et al., 2000; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Minondo, 2001; Stewart, 2019). Previous studies have investigated how paraeducators feel concerning the many responsibilities. Classroom paraeducators have expressed that they are overwhelmed and do not feel that they can effectively work with students who have severe disabilities because they do not have appropriate training (Brock et al., 2017; Douglas et al., 2016).

Self-Efficacy Measurement

Because self-efficacy influences the workplace, it is crucial to understand an assessment to measure and predict human behavior to improve and maintain workplaces. Most self-efficacy

studies use a quantitative approach (Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018; Wheatley, 2002). There are different dimensions to self-efficacy; researchers often address social and emotional, cognitive, and task-oriented self-efficacy dimensions in the workplace (Loeb et al., 2016). Research demonstrating paraeducators' perceptions and self-efficacy are from classroom paraeducators. Their perceptions are collected and then analyzed through rating scales, surveys, or questionnaires directed to address potential benefits for students with disabilities (Russel et al., 2015, p. 194).

Bandura (1997) explained how "a high sense of efficacy in one activity domain is not necessarily accompanied by high self-efficacy in other realms" (p. 42). Self-efficacy is important to consider when investigating participants' perceptions about their work skills because skill realms may differ. When questioning participants to understand "explanatory and predictive power, measures of personal efficacy must be tailored to domains of functioning and must represent gradations of task demands within those domains" (Bandura, 1997, p. 42). In traditional methodology, when measuring efficacy beliefs, researchers present task demands to participants, who then rate their belief in their ability to perform the task. The survey's questions regarding tasks are phrased as *can do* rather than *will do* when they rate their ability to perform activities because "*can* is a judgement of capability; *will* is a statement of intention (Bandura, 1997, p. 43).

Paraeducators have been investigated regarding their self-efficacy (Barnes et al., 2018; Sandoval-Lucero, 2006), but they do not have one self-efficacy scale or survey that has been created for their role and responsibilities. Paraeducators have similar education goals as teachers to promote learning in students. Therefore, the teachers' self-efficacy scale provides the next best insight as a tool to investigate one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy. While the teachers' self-

efficacy scale is specific to teachers, it is recognized as demonstrating educational values. The teachers' self-efficacy scale investigates the belief in one's ability to promote student learning, which influences "student outcomes such as academic achievement, motivation, and efficacy" (Yada et al., 2019, p. 14). As "teachers begin to exhibit a higher sense of positive self-efficacy, they are more willing to have students with special needs in their classrooms and to incorporate inclusive practices" (Yada et al., 2019), a population that one-to-one paraeducators almost always work alongside. This sense of self-efficacy supports Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory that explains self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

The teacher's self-efficacy scale may be used for teachers in all subjects; for example, the same scale will be used for the Physical Education teacher and Math teacher. As the teacher self-efficacy scale incorporates variables, such as instruction, management, and engagement of students, it is reasonable to consider its applicable information when investigating one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy. The teacher self-efficacy scale has contributed to findings that support Bandura's self-efficacy sources: performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological feedback. Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy have demonstrated successful performance outcomes (Caprara et al., 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Nevertheless, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy have demonstrated poor performance outcomes (Aloe et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2015). The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale has helped to show that teachers with positive verbal persuasion are more likely to provide positive verbal persuasion to their colleagues and students (Coladarci, 1992; Hoover-Dempsey, 1992). Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy have a more positive classroom environment than teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2012), a vicarious experience. Teachers'

physiological feedback, such as psychological well-being and physical health, have been indicators of their self-efficacy and willingness to continue being a teacher (Wang et al., 2015) and can be a predictor if the teacher will continue after five years (Shyman, 2010).

The teacher self-efficacy scale has ten questions that target job skills with self-efficacy to investigate four major areas: (a) job accomplishment, (b) skill development on the job, (c) social interaction with students, parents, and colleagues, and (d) coping with job stress (Schwarzer et al., 1999). These items were incorporated as they have great importance in the field of education. These subjects, along with Bandura's (1986) sources of self-efficacy, were used to create questions that apply to educational professionals across the field.

While there is no research-based self-efficacy scale or questionnaire specifically for one-to-one paraeducators, the teacher self-efficacy scale has provided insight into the educational foundations to incorporate when investigating educational professionals' self-efficacy. The research gap regarding one-to-one paraeducators continues while further investigating methods to understand one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy. The teacher self-efficacy scale provides a tool that incorporates educational values and Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources that support his social cognitive theory.

Summary

Chapter Two explored Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory with a focus on self-efficacy, along with literature that supports the investigation of one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions. The purpose of the study is to understand the perceptions of one-to-one paraeducators in self-contained special education programs regarding their role-related self-efficacy. Therefore, this literature review acknowledges the gap in research regarding one-to-one

paraeducators while investigating paraeducators' history, laws and requirements, roles and responsibilities, along with their training, and how stakeholders view paraeducators.

Chapter two supports this transcendental phenomenological study. It aims to fill the gap in research and provide researchers and leaders of paraeducators an understanding of paraeducators' needs to help students in self-contained special education programs to establish independence. The literature supports the need to further research regarding one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions. The literature educates stakeholders about the further need for information regarding one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. An understanding of one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy will aid in resolving current concerns regarding unclear roles and responsibilities, lack of training, current perspectives (Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019) and promoting student achievement (Mahler et al., 2018; Mok & Moore, 2019; Stewart, 2019). Chapter Three presents the design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, researcher's role, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations for the present research study.

Design

In their most simple form, qualitative designs are typically used to collect and analyze non-numerical data. This data type is particularly beneficial when exploring abstract concepts such as feelings, perceptions, and experiences. Rooted in a naturalistic paradigm, in which the researcher epistemologically believes that reality is socially constructed, a qualitative design is helpful when the meaning or essence of a phenomenon is sought. According to Creswell (1988), through a qualitative design, the researcher "builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). The study was designed to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. This study is best situated within a qualitative paradigm because this researcher is intimately acquainted with the phenomenon under study and served as the key instrument of data collection,

captured the participants' perspectives, and reported the results of this study as an in-depth narrative (Creswell, 1998).

Although there are multiple qualitative research approaches, a phenomenological approach is often employed to help understand people's lived experiences. According to Smith (2018), phenomenology "is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (¶3). Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, believed that "we can only know what we experience" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). Thus, a phenomenological study is one that focuses on the participants' descriptions of their experiences. Within the phenomenological design, two common approaches are hermeneutical, which focuses on the meaning of an experience, and transcendental, which places the greatest emphasis on the experience's essence. Unlike hermeneutical phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology focuses on the experience from the participants' perspective rather than the researcher interpreting the meaning of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have observed one-to-one paraeducators in the field for many years; preconceived notions must be withheld about their experiences to capture the participants' true perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, transcendental phenomenology research studies report their findings in narrative form, focusing on providing the reader with lengthy quotes and detailed, thick descriptions of the participants' experiences.

A transcendental phenomenological approach was selected for this study because the participants' perceptions are vitally important to ascertaining their lived experiences. The data from this study is not easily quantifiable and was provided through participant interviews, discussion groups, and reflective journaling. Using a transcendental phenomenological approach also allowed me to acknowledge personal experiences with phenomena and provided an avenue

to prevent those experiences from clouding judgment via the epoché process (Moustakas, 1994).

I kept a journal throughout the data collection process, recording thoughts, ideas, and perceptions

regarding the experiences of one-to-one paraeducators (Appendix J). By transcending personal

beliefs about one-to-one paraeducators and their self-efficacy, I understood their experiences

with a fresh and open perspective, allowing me to tell their authentic, unadulterated stories.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this transcendental phenomenological study:

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school

students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms?

Sub-Questions

1. What do one-to-one paraeducators believe about their ability to execute the courses of
   action required to support students with disabilities?

2. What do one-to-one paraeducators believe about the ability of their peers to execute the
   courses of action required to support students with disabilities?

3. How do one-to-one paraeducators describe the job-related verbal encouragement that
   they receive from others?

4. How do one-to-one paraeducators describe their moods when reflecting on job-related
   activities?

Setting

This transcendental phenomenological study was conducted in the Mountain school

district (pseudonym), a northwestern public school district. A pseudonym was used for one-to-

one paraeducators, the school, and the district they were assigned to. This school district was

selected because it has three high schools housing self-contained special education departments. Self-contained special education programs have students who are impacted more severely with developmental delays, resulting in more one-to-one paraeducators in this type of program (Russel, et al., 2015), ideally providing a strong sample size. This school district was chosen because it had over 70 one-to-one paraeducators, which served as a strong sample pool.

This school district serves students from suburban and rural areas and students from the native American tribe next to the city limits. At the time of the study, the school district consisted of 15 elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools, including 18,002 students (OSPI, 2019). Within these 15 schools, 12.4% of students received special education services, and 58.7% of students in the district were low-income (OSPI, 2019). This district is very diverse in cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. The demographics of the one-to-one paraeducators were collected before data collection. The district is led by its own superintendent and a board of directors. The one-to-one paraeducators are monitored by a certificated teacher, whom an assigned principal or assistant principal supervises within each high school. Permission was first obtained from the school district and then by the school's principal or assistant principal overseeing the school's special education department. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, district contact and permission were through email and Google Forms.

Participants

Nationally, more than 400,000 full-time paraeducators work with students who receive special education services (Sobeck et al., 2019). Demographically, the average age of a paraprofessional is 44 years old. 77% are female, and 63% are white (Zippia.com). Within the Mountain school district, approximately 70 one-to-one paraeducators are assigned to work with students served in the self-contained setting. To ensure familiarity with the phenomenon under

study, participants were required to have at least one academic year of experience as a one-to-one paraeducator in a self-contained classroom. Given this relatively small sample pool, criterion-based sampling, defined as selecting all cases that meet a specific criterion (Patton, 2002), was used to invite all qualifying paraeducators to participate in this study. Table 3.1 includes the demographic data collected from the participants and how they scored themselves on the self-efficacy questionnaire.

Table 3.1

Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Years' Experience	Education	Age	Gender	Self-Efficacy Questionnaire
Amelia	4	Bachelor's	61-70	Female	33
Ava	7	Masters	61-70	Female	33
Charlotte	9	Some College	31-40	Female	37
Emma	10	Some College	31-40	Female	35
Harper	5	Bachelor's	18-30	Female	29
Isabella	3	Some College	70+	Female	34
Joseph	1.5	Masters	31-40	Male	38
Luna	8	Some College	51-60	Female	38
Mia	7	Some College	41-50	Female	34
Micah	2	Some College	18-30	Male	31
Sophia	6	High School	41-50	Female	31

Note: The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire is a self-score rated out of 40.

The Mountain school district building principals were contacted through email to procure a list of potential participants (see Appendix C). This initial contact introduced the study and contained all necessary documents needed for consent to participate (Appendix B). Eleven one-

to-one paraeducators participated in this study. This number of participants was ideal for common themes and experiences to emerge while ensuring replication is possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once signed consent was obtained, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity (Given, 2008). Detailed information regarding the procedures of this study are presented in the following section.

Procedures

The first step in this transcendental phenomenological study was to submit the proposal to the Institution Review Board (IRB) for approval before moving forward with the study. With approval from the IRB (Appendix A) and the Mountain school district, high school principals were contacted. The principal's permission and a list of one-to-one paraeducators who meet the criteria were requested (Appendix C). Potential participants were contacted through their work email. When participants were contacted, they were provided with details of the study, an invitation to participate (Appendix D), and a consent form with the confidentiality protocol (Appendix B) that they signed digitally. Once the consent form was signed, the data collection methods were scheduled, which included the interview, audio journal entries, and focus groups. Directions for participating in the online interview and focus group were provided (Appendix G). The interview was recorded with audio and visual display through the video conference platform. Detailed information regarding the data collection procedures is presented later in this chapter. Upon the completion of data collection, data analysis began.

Researcher's Role

I took on the role of a human instrument while conducting research and data collection. Data was mediated through myself, the human instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). As a human instrument, my biases and assumptions were recognized. Serving as a special education

teacher, I managed one-to-one paraeducators' professional development, day-to-day routines, and disciplinary procedures as needed. This experience placed me in an etic role with the participants as I was intimately acquainted with the population under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Considering my role as a special education teacher, I excluded any one-to-one paraeducators that I supervised from the sample. A supervisory role was not held over any of the participants selected for this study. Because of the experience working with one-to-one paraeducators, I practiced the "epoché" process (Moustakas, 1994) by bracketing personal biases and assumptions about one-to-one paraeducators and self-efficacy through reflective field notes (Appendix J) to promote my awareness of the data (Smith, 2018). Epoché and bracketing were practiced by taking the steps (Moustakas, 1994) described in the following data collection and data analysis sections.

Data Collection

Three sources of data were collected in this transcendental phenomenological study. Data triangulation included three data sources to enhance the quality of data in several ways to provide an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). These data sources include virtual meeting interviews, audio journal entries, and virtual meeting focus groups. Data collection began with a semi-structured interview. This technique was used to ascertain a broad view of the phenomenon under study from the participants' perspective. The audio diaries followed the expectation that after talking about their experience during the interview, the participants had greater personal awareness and insight into their day-to-day practices. The audio diaries were used to capture the participants' experiences in real-time. Finally, the focus group concluded the data collection portion of this study. Both broad and

independent introspection and conferring with colleagues brought closure but also brought collective experiences and themes to light.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, data collection occurred through digital platforms. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via *Google Meet*, capturing audio and video recordings. Detailed instructions for using this platform were provided to the participants before the interview's commencement (Appendix G). The audio diaries were captured on each participant's cell phone via *Journify* and then shared with this researcher at the end of the day. It was ensured that each participant had audio recording capabilities on their phone, understood how to use it, and how to forward their recording at the interview's close (Appendix H). The focus groups were also conducted via *Google Meet.* Detailed instructions for the focus group's access were explained before the meeting (Appendix G), and audio and visual commentary were recorded.

Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is founded upon questions that provide direction and meaning. In keeping with this tradition, semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method. The semi-structured interview was a pre-constructed set of open-ended questions designed to reveal stories in the form of verbal and non-verbal qualitative data (Cohen et al., 2018). At the beginning of each semi-structured interview, I collected general demographic information from the participants via a Google Forms questionnaire. Additionally, the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE) developed by Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001) was embedded into this questionnaire (See Appendix E). This eight-question self-report, Likert-based instrument was designed to capture participants' beliefs about their capabilities to perform well in the future. The NGSE scale has predicted specific self-efficacy for various tasks in various

contexts with high reliability and unidimensional (Chen et al., 2001). Research indicates that the NGSE scale is "highly reliable and unidimensional" (p. 71) and consistently yields high content validity and strong predictive validity (Chen, Gully, and Eden, 2001). I then used the demographic information to build well-rounded participant vignettes. For the purpose of this study, scores between 0-13 are considered low self-efficacy, scores between 14-27 are considered moderate self-efficacy, and scores between 28-40 are high self-efficacy.

At the onset of each interview, the purpose of the study and confidentiality protocols with the participant was verbally reiterated. Additionally, as the researcher, I ensured the participants were familiar with the online platform and then troubleshot any connection issues. After a strong video feed was secured and the participant had an opportunity to ask questions, then the interview began (Patton, 2015). Throughout the interview, probing and prompting were used to encourage the respondents to provide deeper meaning or depth in their responses. The interview protocol follows:

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your current position as a one-to-one paraeducator?

2. How did you get into this line of work?

3. Would you please describe a typical day at work?

4. Thinking back over your last few years in this position, in what ways have you experienced a sense of accomplishment at work?

5. What work-related experiences have hindered your confidence in your ability to do your job?

6. Thinking about the other one-to-one paraeducators that you have observed in the past, in your option, what makes a strong one-to-one paraeducator?

7. Thinking about other one-to-one paraeducators that you have known or worked with, what may have prevented them from being successful?

8. Regarding verbal job-related feedback and or encouragement you have received from others, what stands out to you as particularly significant?

9. What has been most effective in building your confidence to do your job regarding formal and informal training?

10. Could you please describe aspects of your job that bring you joy or through which you experience positive emotions?

11. Could you please describe aspects of your job that create a sense of anxiety or stress?

12. What experiences have motivated you to persist in your role as a one-to-one paraeducator?

13. Is there anything else you would like me to know about working as a one-to-one paraeducator?

These interview questions were designed around the study's research questions and theoretical framework. Each question helped this researcher dive into each one-to-one paraeducator's thoughts and feelings to better understand the self-efficacy setbacks and successes. The background of the one-to-one paraeducator, the performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal or social persuasions, physiological feedback, and optional additional data was analyzed in relation to self-efficacy.

Background and Rapport

Interview questions one and two were designed to create an opportunity for the researcher to build a rapport with the participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and share background information on their past experiences and perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). Interview question three was designed to capture the participants' lived experiences and build a foundation for the central research question, which sought to better understand the participants' lived experiences (Bandura, 1994).

Performance Outcomes and Self-Efficacy

Interview questions four and five were designed to address research sub-question one, which focused on individual experiences because one-to-one paraeducators have mixed understandings of their performance outcomes (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). Performance outcomes are key factors that indicate a strong understanding of self-efficacy. Confidence in one's ability to perform desired actions is a strong indicator of performance mastery or success. Successes can promote a powerful belief in someone's personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997), while difficulties can instill setbacks in self-efficacy. These questions were designed to capture the successes and setbacks that have contributed to the participants' self-efficacy.

Vicarious Experiences and Self-Efficacy

Interview questions six and seven sought to understand the one-to-one paraeducators' vicarious experiences and provide data related to research sub-question two. Vicarious experiences are the second strongest influence on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). These interview questions addressed the vicarious experiences of one-to-one paraeducators with other one-to-one paraeducators. Paraeducators often relate to vicarious experiences through training models

(Garvis, 2011). Vicarious experiences are more impactful when it comes from someone with significance (Bandura, 1997); in this case, other one-to-one paraeducators.

Verbal Persuasions and Self-Efficacy

Interview questions eight and nine investigated the concept of verbal persuasions that research sub-question three addressed. Literature showed that paraeducators often receive corrective feedback over praise, an example of how verbal persuasion can impact paraeducators' efficacy (Lerman et al., 2019). Verbal persuasion in positive feedback or praise has been linked to positive self-efficacy. Social persuasion, in which specific conditions have been created to facilitate effective performances, such as professional development activities, has strengthened self-efficacy. These interview questions were designed to prompt the participants to compare themselves with other one-to-one paraeducators. The greater similarity the participant views, the "more persuasive the models' successes and failures" (Bandura, 1997, p. 87) become in the participants' self-efficacy.

Physiological Feedback and Self-Efficacy

Interview questions ten and eleven explored the physiological feedback that participants' had experienced concerning their self-efficacy. Question ten specifically addressed the emotional arousal that can occur while completing a task resulting in a positive or negative influence on a person's sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, these questions specifically addressed the stressful situations that often evoke emotional experiences, which negatively impact self-efficacy. Previous research has discovered paraeducators' emotional exhaustion but not the experiences that gave them this feeling (Shyman, 2010). Physiological feedback is often acknowledged in "stressful or taxing situations" (Bandura, 1997).

Additional Data

Interview questions twelve and thirteen were placed to gather the remaining information for the central research question. Interview question twelve was designed to capture why the participants persist in their roles as one-to-one paraeducators and better understand their internal and external motivators. Interview question thirteen was designed as a standalone question to offer the participant the opportunity to share any more information that is pertinent to the study and conclude the interview.

Qualitative Audio Journals

After completing the semi-structured interview, participants were given directions for the audio journal task (Appendix H). Participants were asked to keep an audio journal for five days. Audio journal entries were chosen for this study to capture the participants' experiences at the conclusion of their workday. Participation in the interview process sparked participants' awareness of their perspectives regarding the phenomenon. Additionally, this methodology provided the respondents the opportunity to disclose information they may not have felt comfortable sharing in interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The audio journal entry was used to help participants speak their minds and think aloud. Audio journals also captured the tone, allowing the researcher to discover more about the phenomena as they unfolded (Crozier & Cassell, 2016). The audio journal entry instructions were distributed digitally (Appendix H) to the participant at the interview session's conclusion.

Audio journal entries were designed as four questions that participants answered at the end of their workday for five consecutive days, which provided immediate feedback about their experiences. The four questions were supported by the theoretical framework, Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977), which focuses on performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, vicarious

experience, and physiological feedback. The audio journal prompted the participants to answer the following questions each day:

1. What positive or negative influences impacted your performance as a one-to-one paraeducator today?

2. What verbal feedback indirectly or directly influenced your performance day?

3. Compared to other one-to-one paraeducators, how successful were you at doing your job to help students?

4. What feelings do you have about today's work experiences? Why?

The feelings of the participants are what determine self-efficacy. These four questions dived into these feelings and perceptions to create a clearer understanding of self-efficacy and its development.

Performance Perceptions and Self-Efficacy

Journal question one addressed performance outcomes and research sub-question one. The first journal question was designed to understand participants' perspectives regarding both positive and negative influences on their job performance. This understanding helped to investigate the underlying reasons for previous literature suggesting positive and negative influences on self-efficacy (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Shyman, 2010). Performance outcomes were investigated because it was associated with paraeducators' burnout rates (Shyman, 2010). This interview question was designed to prompt the participants' reflection on the specifics that build upon their big and small performance perceptions, which ultimately contributed to their self-efficacy.

Verbal Persuasion and Self-Efficacy

Journal question two addressed verbal persuasion and research sub-question three. The

goal of journal question two was to hear participants' experiences and perceptions from conversations with peers and supervisors. Conversations can have a powerful effect on one's self-efficacy and may prove the rationale for role conflict (Shyman, 2010). Paraeducators often receive corrective verbal persuasion rather than praise (Lerman et al., 2019), which is also consistent with the supervisory hierarchy's unclarities (Shyman, 2010). This journal question was designed to prompt the participants to compare themselves with other one-to-one paraeducators immediately after a workday. At the same time, they were still influenced by the day's experiences.

Vicarious Experience and Self-Efficacy

Another source of self-efficacy, vicarious experience, was addressed through journal question three, which was also researched in sub-question two. Vicarious experiences occur as individuals interact and see others, then how they feel relates to them emotionally. The information from journal question three dug into the participants' perceptions of themselves and others, such as paraeducators with whom they related. Participants' vicarious experiences were investigated to understand better how one-to-one paraeducators view their work experience when working with students and staff. This journal question was designed to prompt the participants to reflect on their vicarious experiences at a time when they still remember the details that led to their physiological feedback in journal question four.

Physiological Feedback and Self-Efficacy

Journal question four addressed participants' physiological feedback and appeared in research sub-question four. The prior journal questions built up to journal question four, which interpreted participants' feelings that directly impacted their efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Participants' feelings were investigated because emotional demand impacts self-efficacy and the

emotion they may invest in their students (Shyman, 2010). Physiological feedback is reported as a leading determiner of paraeducators' burnout (Shyman, 2010). This journal question was designed to prompt the participants to reflect on their day-to-day emotions while they may still be experiencing them.

Focus Groups

The final component of the data triangulation was the focus groups. Focus groups were designed to understand individuals' thoughts and feelings about certain opinions, topics, or environments (Krueger & Casey, 2015), especially to spark more participants' thoughts and perceptions by hearing others' thoughts. A focus group was used in this study to (a) better understand participants' feelings and opinions, (b) recognize varying perspectives; (c) discover new insights that correspond with sources of self-efficacy; and (d) investigate new ideas offered by the group conversation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Focus groups were chosen to support the data in this study because a focus group's characteristics include an intimate setting with relatable people focused on a discussion aiming to understand the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups for this study included eleven one-to-one paraeducators from self-contained high school special education programs. Participants were split into two separate focused discussions, then shared perceptions and opinions about the sources of their self-efficacy.

When conducting each focus group (two groups of five to six participants each), participants met on an online collaborative platform, *Google Meet*, with cameras on, which allowed the group to see each other to foster a sense of inclusion. At this point, the participants had signed the consent form to be audio and video recorded through the online platform

(Appendix B). Still, they were reminded that their responses were recorded, and the same confidentiality protocol was followed in the focus group as in the interview.

Focus Group Guiding Questions

1. Please tell us your name and how long you have been a one-to-one paraeducator.

2. What is it like being a one-to-one paraeducator?

3. How do you feel about your ability to support the student in your care?

4. Thinking about those feelings, how do they influence your ability to support the student in your care?

5. What could your supervising teacher or administrator do to help you feel more confident in your job?

6. What advice would you give to a new one-to-one paraeducator who is just entering the field?

7. What, if any, comments, concerns, or suggestions do you have regarding your beliefs in being a successful one-to-one paraeducator?

Background and Rapport

At the beginning of the focus group, each participant was asked to share his or her name and how long they had been a one-to-one paraeducator. Given that the focus group occurred through a digital meeting platform, introductions were to enhance everyone's opportunity to share, creating a comfortable environment (Gray et al., 2020). After each participant shared his or her introduction, the purpose statement was delivered. Next, the guiding questions began the group discussion. The guiding questions were designed to collect authentic and applicable stories of one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Question one encouraged everyone to speak at the beginning of the focus group because the longer the silence

occurs before someone shares, the less likely they are to share something (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Performance Perceptions and Self-Efficacy

Question two probed participants to think back to their own experiences that contributed to their performance (Krueger, 2002). This question sought to understand the experiences that have contributed to their perceptions about being a one-to-one paraeducator. Experiences can change an individual's self-efficacy depending on different perceptions (Bergey et al., 2015). Question two was intended to direct participants to think about their feelings that may be associated with the participants' self-efficacy.

Physiological Feedback and Self-Efficacy

Question three was designed to address participants' feelings because feelings can be deeply related to memories (Bandura, 1997). Question four provided participants an opportunity to expand on these feelings and provide more detail on their previous feedback. These questions investigated the physiological feedback and the responses that the participants experienced. Individuals interpret their physiological feedback differently depending on their self-efficacy; therefore, understanding physiological feedback can indicate their self-efficacy (Britner & Pajares, 2005).

Verbal Persuasion and Self-Efficacy

Question five sought to understand the verbal persuasion that one-to-one paraeducators receive. This question specifically addressed the verbal persuasion from their leaders, including teachers who have reported their own unclarities about paraeducators' roles (Shyman, 2010). This question was designed to understand the positive verbal persuasion that has kept them

motivated to continue as one-to-one paraeducators (Clark & Newberry, 2019). The focus group

questions were designed for participants to build upon each other's input and verbal persuasions.

Vicarious Experience and Self-Efficacy

Question five allowed participants to vicariously think about what they needed to feel more

confident in their job, addressing their self-efficacy. This was valuable during focus groups so

participants could hear each other's experiences and vicariously build their perceptions. When

individuals feel more confident in their roles, they are more likely to succeed (Bandura, 2000).

This confidence comes through different interactions, conversations, and observing others they

can relate with.

Additional Data

Question six acknowledged their veteran knowledge and sought information about their

experiences as a one-to-one paraeducator. Question seven was designed to allow participants to

add any thoughts that they did not get a chance to share or may not have wanted to say aloud in

the group. This question served as a conclusion to the focus group and the process of working

with the participants. At the end of the focus group, the participants were thanked for their

participation in investigating one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions.

Data Analysis

This study used Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological transcendental approach by setting

aside all prejudgments regarding the phenomenon to "be completely open, receptive, and naïve

in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon

being investigated" (Bandura, 1997, p. 22). Using epoché to set aside biases and prejudgments

of the phenomenon investigated via journaling and reflective notes, I approached the data with a

fresh perspective. Data analysis took place upon three different data collection tools: interviews, qualitative audio journal entries, and focus groups.

The data collected through this study was scrutinized via the thematic method. Thematic analysis is a method for familiarizing yourself with data; one must first analyze, organize, and describe before reporting themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was used because it appropriately examines participants' perspectives, shedding light on similarities and differences that suggest new ideas and directions (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes depicted a subjective description of participants' perceptions (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019).

Data analysis occurred using six phases: 1) Familiarization with the data, 2) Generating initial codes, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing themes, 5) Defining and naming themes, 6) Producing the report (Nowell et al., 2017). Before the six phases, identifiable information was removed (such as student names, participant names, etc.) from the interview, focus group, and document data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These six phases support bracketing prior experiences to ensure dependability.

Prior to phase one, I used computer software to transcribe the recordings verbatim. I then reviewed the transcriptions alongside the audio to verify that it was transcribed accurately. A copy of the pertinent transcriptions was emailed to the participants for their review. No feedback was received within five business days; I then began phase one of the data analysis. In phase one, data was reviewed to establish the researcher's familiarity. This was done by documenting theoretical and reflective thoughts to spark potential data themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Reviewing the data included organizing transcripts from the interviews and audio journals into well-organized archives. Becoming familiar with data at this stage later promoted the researcher's ability to search for themes.

Phase two began by generating initial codes, which was supported by "researcher triangulation, reflexive journaling, use of a coding framework, [and an] audit trail of code generation" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). Generating initial codes also revealed relevant concepts, themes, events, examples, names, places, or dates (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Coding the data is a reflective and interactive way for researchers to focus on specific aspects of the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

Phase three of thematic analysis searched for themes, which occurred through "diagramming to make sense of theme connections, keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). Transcripts were inputted into a program to code the themes shared through the participants' interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. The transcripts were first read in detail several times to "achieve the sense of the whole, to explore the main meaning behind the data and trace back-related ideas for understanding hidden concerns in the data" (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019, p. 4). A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) tool, NVivo12, helped to "process the data ready for analysis [and] these can group, retrieve, organize, and search single and multiple data sets, and return these ready for analysis" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 387).

Phase four included the review of themes and "test for adequacy by returning to raw data" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). Using the outputs from the NVivo, the amount of incidence or occurrence of words or codes were counted to conduct a search to find the multiple combinations of themes to begin identifying patterns of themes and bracket information (Moustakas, 1994). These themes did not immediately answer the research questions but led the researcher to understand the phenomenon aligned with the theoretical framework. A program (Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT)) was used to identify the major keywords used throughout the data to

create themes shared by the participants (Patton, 2015). Themes were coded from the participants' interviews, focus groups, and journal entries.

Phase five of thematic analysis occurred by defining and naming themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Once the themes from the data were determined, I began analyzing the data into a structural theme to synthesize the participants' lived experiences and reflect "how" the phenomenon was represented (Moustakas, 1994) through the data collected from interviews, focus groups, and qualitative journal entries. Further analysis of the data searched for themes, patterns, and distinctions between the one-to-one paraeducator participants' responses. The pattern was compared to recent research regarding paraeducators, such as themes including, but not limited to, their experience with implementing curriculum, supporting classroom management, and supporting students with diverse needs (Gibson et al., 2016).

Finally, in phase six, the final analysis report was produced (Appendix I). The report includes informative descriptions of the phenomenon, data gathered through investigation and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). The informative descriptions of the phenomenon were shared with participants to aid in understanding the participants' experiences.

Trustworthiness

This study used instrument triangulation to explain the rich complexities of behavior from more than one viewpoint, a powerful way of establishing validity (Cohen et al., 2018). Triangulation gathers and analyzes multiple perspectives from varied data sources (Patton, 2015). Triangulation is useful when wholesome educational outcomes, such as this study, are sought (Cohen et al., 2018). Trustworthiness was addressed by considering credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility, parallel to internal validity, was demonstrated through systematic, in-depth fieldwork; systematic and conscientious analysis of data; credibility of the inquirer; and the readers' and users' philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015) to fit the collected data to real-world reality. Credibility was enhanced in this study through the conscientious and efficient data analysis with attention to credibility (Patton, 2015). The audio journal, open-ended interview, and focus group questions strengthened credibility as a triangulation method because they helped maintain the researcher's neutrality (Patton, 2015). The credibility was shown by sharing the detailed steps of data collection and data analysis of the interview, qualitative journal entries, and focus group responses as an experience that other researchers and readers can recognize (Nowell et al., 2017). Finally, credibility was enhanced by allowing the participants to review and comment on the transcriptions via member checking to ensure the findings resonate with their experiences.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is parallel to the reliability, and confirmability is parallel to objectivity when enhancing qualitative studies' quality and credibility (Patton, 2015). Dependability and confirmability were assured through this study by minimizing errors and biases. This was done by implementing epoché throughout the entire study, especially data collection and data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Another method that ensured this was using thematic analysis and documenting information to make it logical and traceable to create a research process that readers could examine (Nowell et al., 2017). Audio and video transcripts were accurately transcribed into written documents before analyzing information to code participant experiences; this allowed the researcher to become familiar with the information and provide a transcript to

participants if they wished to review their conversation further. To promote confirmability, the researcher then explained theoretical, methodological, and analytical decisions throughout the study (Nowell et al., 2017), explaining why decisions were made and conducted to other researchers and readers.

Transferability

Transferability, parallel to external validity, establishes relevant findings that can be applicable to wider contexts while still providing content-rich information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). To ensure the study's transferability to other cases, readers were provided with extensive details and information to establish similarities between the study and how findings can be transferred (Patton, 2015). Transferability was assured by providing the interview questions, the focus group guiding questions, and the participants' audio journal questions. This transferability allowed other researchers and readers to make their own judgments about the work. This study's results can transfer to the perspectives and perceptions of one-to-one paraeducators in other school districts. These perspectives and perceptions can be used when administrators investigate common themes that need to be addressed in other districts, as suggested by other researchers (Douglas et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2016).

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the study, the procedures and interview questions were approved by the IRB and Liberty School of Education committee members before implementation. A letter of approval from the school district was obtained before any research investigation began. Confidentiality was guaranteed to all participants to encourage honesty in the interview, focus groups, and audio journal entries. This encouragement occurred as informed consent and confidentiality forms (Appendix B) were shared with the participants. A signature of consent was

recorded. Participants volunteered to be a part of the study and may have chosen not to answer questions or drop out of the study at any point. Participants were not required to join the study, and their participation would not hinder their employment. All identifiable information was removed from interview transcription and data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Confidentiality was ensured as the study's electronic files, and data were stored on a password-protected computer, and all identifiable information was replaced with participant pseudonyms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After the study, monetary compensation of $100 per person was offered in the form of a gift card. This compensation was done to compensate the participants for their willingness to devote their time to the study.

Summary

This research used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators who support high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. The study was supported through primary data and triangulation, which built a foundation for answering the research questions presented. All methods investigated the phenomenon of one-to-one paraeducators' work-related self-efficacy. Through instrument triangulation, open-ended interview questions, audio journal entries, and focus groups, I described the real-world phenomenon of one-to-one paraeducators within the real-world context. The data collected through this study was scrutinized via the thematic method. A design was developed based on the research questions to investigate and collect data to analyze while considering the participants, setting, the researcher's role, the trustworthiness of the procedures, and the ethical considerations of everyone involved.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. The purpose of Chapter Four is to present the results of the data analysis as findings in this study. This chapter includes participant descriptions and the findings shared by participants. The findings in this chapter include the theme development that demonstrates the uniqueness of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon of being a one-to-one paraeducator in a high school self-contained special education program in western Washington. The results address the research questions through organized themes while considering outlier data.

Participants

The participants' eligibility criteria to be a part of the study led this researcher to contact three high school principals that housed self-contained special education programs in western Washington. The high school principals were the point of contact to find potential one-to-one paraeducator participants. The school district and one-to-one paraeducators are described using pseudonyms that compliment the participants' culture. A total of three school principals were contacted, and their responses yielded names of 13 eligible one-to-one paraeducators. Of the 13 eligible one-to-one paraeducators invited to participate, 11 volunteered to participate in the study. The 11 participants all took part in the one-to-one interviews; ten participated in 3-5 audio journals, and ten participated in one of two focus groups.

Amelia

Amelia is a white female within the 61-70 age bracket who has a bachelor's degree and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for four years. Amelia found it important to build positive relationships with her students as she helped them with medical, hygiene, and communication. Amelia expressed the unique relationships that one-to-one paraeducators establish with their assigned student. Amelia described how she had been proud of her student, just as she had been proud of her own child. As a caring person, Amelia had experienced situations between staff that created a sense of anxiety in the classroom. However, as a paraeducator, she felt that she needed to "let it go unless it comes to student safety, and then I probably would put a foot down on that. I don't care who the other person is, because that's that's huge for me." Amelia became passionate when sharing the importance of student safety regarding her ethics when working in a self-contained special education program. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Amelia scored her self-efficacy as 33 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Ava

Ava is a white female within the 61-70 age bracket who has a graduate degree and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for seven years. One day while attending her daughter's parent-teacher conference, the teacher asked that Ava become a substitute paraeducator because the district was woefully lacking. Ava loved the field, so she eventually became a special education teacher before becoming a paraeducator again. Ava could not join on a video call, so she called in using her phone for an audio call.

Ava described the importance of being patient as a one-to-one paraeducator. Ava explained that patience encourages students to communicate, which creates a positive learning environment for the student. Ava described that once "they realize that you're in their corner,

they realize that you believe they can succeed. It shows that they understand that. And I think that one hundred percent of the battle." Ava believed that when working as a one-to-one paraeducator, especially with a student who is nonverbal, communication promotes students' independence and success. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Ava scored her self-efficacy as 33 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Charlotte

Charlotte is a white female within the 31-40 age bracket, with some college and experience as a one-to-one paraeducator for nine years with the same student. She described the unique relationship between one-to-one paraeducators and their students. For example, Charlotte wanted to promote independence but needed to be close by in case of a medical emergency. She described her role as being

> within a reachable distance in case, I need to assist the student to help the student to the ground because I don't want him obviously to fall. So, I may seem like I hover more, but it's for a good reason.

Charlotte believed in the importance of promoting independence while still supporting students' unique needs. Charlotte was passionate about being a one-to-one paraeducator and described the complex challenges of her role and how rewarding it felt to help her student. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Charlotte scored her self-efficacy as 37 out of 40, a very high level of self-efficacy.

Emma

Emma, a white female within the 31-40 age bracket, has been a one-to-one paraeducator for ten years with some college. In her thirties, Emma had been a one-to-one paraeducator with several different students for over nine years. She was excited to share how her experiences with

different students shaped her life. Emma became a one-to-one paraeducator because she was tired of working the night shift. A paraeducator's hours aligned with her daughter's schedule, allowing them to spend more time together. Emma quickly found that it was the best of both worlds; she could see her daughter and found her passion in helping to serve students with a wide spectrum of needs. She expressed how difficult it can be physically and emotionally to work with one-to-one students who exhibit difficult behaviors. Still, as a one-to-one paraeducator, she saw the child behind the disability. Emma described her role as a one-to-one paraeducator as a "jack of all trades" because one-to-one paraeducators do more than help teach lessons. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Emma scored her self-efficacy as 35 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Harper

Harper is a multiracial female within the 18-30 age bracket with a bachelor's degree. She has been a one-to-one paraeducator for five years. In high school, Harper found her passion for working with students who had special needs. As a one-to-one paraeducator who had worked with several students who were nonverbal, she had a passion for helping students learn to use communication devices. Harper described her bachelor's degree in Psychology as beneficial. Still, it never provided her with the hands-on experiences that taught her the skills needed to be a one-to-one paraeducator. Harper continued to explain that "it's not always easy, it's not necessarily for everyone. And it seems like there's a lot of people that come and go, but the ones that stick around, they learn a lot from it, and it's rewarding." Throughout Harper's interview, she frequently mentioned how being a one-to-one paraeducator presented different challenges than most jobs, but overall, it was rewarding. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Harper scored her self-efficacy as 29 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Isabella

Isabella is a white female within the 70+ age bracket, with some college, and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for three years. Isabella fell into the world of education when she left the business field but was not quite ready to retire. Once living in a rural area, Isabella first taught as a teacher for a year before she moved and became a paraeducator. Isabella had been a one-to-one paraeducator with the same student for three years. When Isabella described her day, she was thoughtful when she shared

> I'm with a wonderful, beautiful student who challenges me, and it's taken almost three years for her to train me how life is going to be. But I love being a one on one because you get to spend that time with that student and really see them grow. And hopefully you feel like you had some part in it.

Isabella shared how working with her one-to-one student was not easy at first; it was stressful and brought some anxiety. Over the years, Isabella had become more comfortable working with this student, but she shared that she was still learning and appreciated others' feedback. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Isabella scored her self-efficacy as 34 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Joseph

Joseph is a white male within the 31-40 age bracket, has a graduate degree, and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for one and a half years. After working in the business field, Joseph transitioned to education with a master's and two bachelor's degrees. Because Joseph earned these degrees out of the country, they did not easily transfer to the United States, so he, at the time, was earning his teaching degree in the United States. Joseph became a one-to-one paraeducator to learn teaching skills to help his daughter, and even with a significant salary

change, he quickly found passion in helping his one-to-one student. Joseph connected with his one-to-one student and the family as both recent immigrants. This unique connection "means a lot to her. Uh, probably more than anyone in the class can maybe understand," Joseph truly valued this connection. Joseph tied the unique relationships with students as a part of his role and responsibility as a one-to-one paraeducator. Joseph explained that as a one-to-one paraeducator, "you're forming young people's future, you know, and you have to take it seriously as you're a big part of their life going forward." Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Joseph scored his self-efficacy as 38 out of 40, a very high level of self-efficacy.

Luna

Luna is a white female within the 51-60 age bracket, with some college and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for eight years. Luna, a single mother at the time, became a one-to-one paraeducator because she loved working with children and helping her own two sons learn. Luna shared how it was unique to work in the district's self-contained program and have a son who also attended school in the same district's self-contained program. Before becoming a one-to-one paraeducator, Luna attended a community college to earn a Paraeducator Certificate. Luna described how helpful it was to have courses and training before entering the paraeducator field.

Luna had worked as a one-to-one paraeducator with several different students who presented a spectrum of abilities and were in all age groups. Luna had taken ownership of learning skills outside of work time to help her students, such as learning Braille. After her eight years of being a one-to-one paraeducator, Luna described how exhausted she was and experienced a hard time getting sick when working in the schools. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Luna scored her self-efficacy as 38 out of 40, a very high level of self-efficacy.

Mia

Mia is a white female within the 41-50 age bracket, with some college and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for seven years. Mia's caring heart glowed throughout her interview as she shared her passion for working as a one-to-one paraeducator. Mia was in her 40's, enjoyed time with family, was a caregiver for her mother, and was "addicted […to] helping out as much as I could." Mia had a bachelor's degree in physics, so when she interviewed to become a one-to-one paraeducator, the district reminded her that she could be a teacher. Mia quickly and respectfully declined to become a teacher because she respected how much work teachers do, and that was not something she was looking forward to.

After volunteering in her son's kindergarten classroom, Mia became a one-to-one paraeducator. Mia had been a one-to-one paraeducator to several different students over the years, which had offered her the opportunity to work with students with various needs, academically and behaviorally, and students at all school levels. Mia appreciated the training that taught her new information and reminded her of best practices. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Mia scored her self-efficacy as 34 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Micah

Micah is a white male with some college. Micah was in his early twenties, enjoyed sports, and had a background as a physical trainer, encouraging people to reach their goals. Still somewhat new to the field, Micah had been a one-to-one paraeducator for two years. Micah was not searching for a new job like many other one-to-one paraeducators; he was approached by a school district employee asking if he would be interested because the district needed

paraeducators, and they knew Micah was a great person. Micah truly enjoyed working in special education and planned to earn his teaching certificate soon.

Micah had worked with several one-to-one students who had presented very different needs. Due to his assigned one-to-one student's poor attendance, Micah often worked as a classroom paraeducator and several other students in the short two years he had been a one-to-one paraeducator. Micah worked with one particular student long enough to instill growth and trust, even as this student had difficulty trusting others. He explained that "the small victories" kept him motivated through the "high stress" that one-to-one paraeducators experience. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview, Micah scored his self-efficacy as 31 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

Sophia

Sophia is a white female within the 41-50 age bracket with a high school diploma and has been a one-to-one paraeducator for six years. Her twenty years of experience as a Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA) was helpful when she became a one-to-one paraeducator, as her student had medical needs. Sophia's knowledge in caregiving and special education was apparent as she described her life background. Sophia has a son with Autism. Therefore, unlike many new paraeducators, she understood the population she would work with within a high school's self-contained special education program.

Sophia's insight encouraged her one-to-one student to meet new goals that others did not believe he would reach. For example, when Sophia met her one-to-one student six years ago, she shared that people gave her a list of the tasks that the student could not perform. Sophia passionately and boldly explained that this often happens when one-to-one paraeducators meet new students but shared how this should not happen. Sophia became emotional, explaining how

one-to-one paraeducators persist through difficulties and unknowns because their students'

successes are worth the effort. Using the self-efficacy survey at the beginning of the interview,

Sophia scored her self-efficacy as 31 out of 40, a high level of self-efficacy.

<div align="center">

Results

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Each participant was asked to share their experiences through interview questions, four

journal prompts throughout five workdays, and a focus group. The questions and prompts in each

data collection method were designed around the four sources of self-efficacy to support the

study's central research question and four sub-research questions. At the beginning of the

interviews, the participants answered an eight-question Likert survey regarding self-efficacy.

Participants were given directions to record and answer audio journal prompts for the next five

working days following the interview. Participants were assigned to a focus group and

rescheduled if needed. The stories and thoughts gathered through three data sources contributed

to the study's data triangulation. Ultimately an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived

experiences working as one-on-one paraeducators emerged (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Theme Development

To accomplish data analysis, Moustakas' (1990) transcendental phenomenology

framework was utilized to ascertain an understanding of the lived experiences of one-to-one

paraeducators' self-efficacy. Throughout the data analysis process, I practiced epoché by

identifying and acknowledging my preconceived ideas by keeping field notes in Appendix J.

Utilizing bracketing further assisted in identifying biases and permitted a fresh perspective on the

phenomenon experienced by each participant. The main themes obtained from data analysis may

be viewed below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Themes from data analysis

Theme	Sub-Theme
Bottom of the Totem Pole	Undervalued & Unheard
	Longing for a Voice
Uniqueness of Paraeducators	Monitoring Student Well-Being
	Deciphering & Managing Behavior
	Unanticipated Surprises
	Ambiguous Role
	Descriptions
Mental Strain	Administrative Issues
	Stress Creates Anxiety
	Impact of Desire for Appreciation

Bottom of the Totem Pole

The bottom of the totem pole was expressed through participants' lived experiences. Many paraeducators felt that hierarchical dynamics diminished their voices despite their desire to advocate for their student. Within theme one, two key concepts emerged: feeling undervalued and their longing for a voice.

The concept of being at the bottom of the totem pole was prevalent throughout many participants' descriptions of hardships. Emma passionately explained,

We're not on the totem pole, we're the dirt on the bottom. […] But here's the thing about

the dirt on the bottom, if it's not there, […] just watch, your whole totem pole is going to

fall down.

The notion of one-to-one paraeducators working at the bottom of the totem pole has established preconceived expectations that they are not even a part of the team. As one-to-one paraeducators are excluded from the team, most participants feel they have not been heard and are longing for a voice.

Paraeducators' longing for their voices to have merit has led to overwhelming feelings of being unimportant or unvalued. One-to-one paraeducators believed they had a valuable insight that could help enhance their student's educational program, yet their expertise was often ignored. Ava expressed, "we were not considered worthy of even bearing the title of [students'] advocator." When asked if their input was considered, one-to-one participants quickly answered "no." Sophia described a "little bit of a disconnect between administration and staff."

Likewise, Harper commented that when she overheard a conversation between supervisors, she stated, "they were undervaluing us, and they never really walked a day in our shoes […which is a] feeling like you're in the bottom." Most participants acknowledged that while they are on the bottom of the totem pole, they long to share valuable input. One-to-one paraeducators long to be acknowledged as valuable team members even if they are on the bottom of the totem pole.

One-to-One Paraeducators Uniqueness

An analysis of the data revealed that one-to-one paraeducators believe their roles and responsibilities are different from classroom paraeducators. Traditionally, paraeducators work in tandem with a classroom teacher to provide universal academic support to a group of students from year to year. However, one-to-one paraeducators often support a single student for several years, resulting in a deep, intimate bond between the paraeducator and student. Charlotte had worked with her student for eight years and described their bond as rewarding. Likewise, Amelia

had worked with her student for two years and shared, "Well, you really become like you're part of their family at that point when you work with them that long."

An outgrowth of the paraeducator-student bond is the one-to-one paraeducators' perceived responsibility to anticipate the student's needs and understand and manage their behavior. Not only do the students become dependent on the support of their paraeducator, but the classroom teachers also do. Charlotte stated, "if I was ever sick, oftentimes people would, jokingly say 'don't ever be sick' because you don't realize how much you're doing to make everything run smoothly until you're not there." Participants' most common areas of responsibility centered around their students' daily living skills, including assistance in the bathroom, eating, mobility, and medical procedures. Emma stated that paraeducators help with "anything from the feedings, changing, assisting them in classes and educational endeavors to a lot of behavioral, making sure that they stay safe, making sure others around them stay safe." Echoing this sense of responsibility for the child's behavior and safety, Micah shared,

> I am in charge of [my student]… whatever it may be. I can find myself being stressed because it's like, oh, what if this kid runs? What if this kid, you know, starts to escalate, and starts to, you know, go after other students?

Additionally, Amelia laughed while explaining

> you know, you get poop on you. We had a student years ago that had explosive diarrhea. Yes, I got it on my clothes. I started keeping a change of clothes at school. Shoes included because shit happens.

Harper encompassed the essence of the uniqueness of paraeducators, stating,

> Well, I would say that being a one-on-one is kind of like being a cross between a teacher and a nurse. Some aspects you do everything from, like learning the student and learning

what their goals are and what you're working towards. And then from that to maybe

doing things that are like in the bathroom where you're teaching them how to learn, how

to do activities that are lifelong and some of them are not even just learning lifelong. It's

just maintaining and making sure that they are keeping a certain level of health, too.

The participants agreed that their intimate and individualized role is determined by the

child's needs they support. As a result, their day-to-day responsibilities are often fluid and can

change rapidly. Emma summarized this dynamic as "wearing multiple hats and switching roles

in a flash." Part of wearing multiple hats and switching roles reveal the feelings that one-to-one

paraeducators are suppressing.

Mental Strain

One-to-one paraeducators revealed a mental strain as a powerful consequence of their

efforts and confidence. Participants shed light on their mental strain as they frequently described

their lived experiences as stressful or creating a sense of anxiety. One-to-one paraeducators have

a heart for supporting their student, but roadblocks create a sense of stress that hinders their

ability to work confidently. Emma tiredly explained how being a one-to-one paraeducator is "A

very challenging job, […] it is one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life. But one of the

most gratifying things." One-to-one paraeducators take their jobs to heart, but they shared how

stress impacts them significantly. When she went home at the end of the day, Harper sighed and

described how "I can literally feel the tension in my body and like, I'm like just so wound up

some days."

One-to-one paraeducators shared that their unique roles are misunderstood by others,

such as those who make administrative decisions at the top of the totem pole. Among several

participants in agreeance, Harper depicted

I don't feel like enough administrators understand exactly the day in and day out of a

paraeducator. If they could take a step in a para's shoes, maybe they could get a little bit

of an idea and understanding for the job.

Participants described how administrative issues, such as district practices and a lack of pay,

have created a sense that administrators lack empathy for one-to-one paraeducators. With

disappointment, Charlotte shared, "you're thinking the higher-ups don't really care about me."

Sophia hesitantly described, "there's a little bit of a disconnect between administration and staff."

Administration issues precluded from the lack of empathy received and lack of pay. Most

of the participants described their minimal pay in a way that made them feel disrespected. Mia

questioned how she would have supported a family if she did not have her spouse's income to

support. Emma heartfully explained, "this is not something you can do for a paycheck. It's going

to drain you. It's going to drain you mentally, physically, financially. You have to want it. And

you have to love it." The ambition of one-to-one paraeducators stems from their passion, but the

lack of empathy from administrative decisions still influences their ability to do well.

The mental strain described by one-to-one paraeducators seemed to be cushioned by

others simply acknowledging their hard work. Participants shared that they feel valued, have joy,

and want to work harder when they receive recognition. Charlotte stressed that "if people feel

like people care about you, you're more inclined to work real hard for them as opposed to like,

well, they don't really care." Amelia happily shared, "it always feels good to be acknowledged."

As she continued to reflect on her appreciation as a one-to-one paraeducator, she expressed with

a saddened heart by sharing that "it's just disheartening."

Research Question Responses

   This study was guided by one central research question and four sub-questions that aligned with how self-efficacy's four sources —performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback—impacted one-to-one paraeducators in western Washington high school self-contained programs. Participants' responses from their one-to-one interviews, participant surveys, audio journals, and focus groups contributed to answering the study's research questions and themes in their unique ways. Table 4.2 displays the relationship between the source of self-efficacy, themes, and research questions.

Table 4.2

Relationship Between Research Questions, Sources of Self-Efficacy, & Themes

Source of Self-Efficacy	Research Questions	Contributing Themes
Performance Outcomes	Sub-Question 1	One-to-One Paraeducators' Uniqueness Mental Strain
Vicarious Experiences	Sub-Question 2	One-to-One Paraeducators' Uniqueness Bottom of Totem Pole
Verbal Persuasion	Sub-Question 3	Mental Strain Bottom of Totem Pole
Physiological Feedback	Sub-Question 4	Mental Strain Bottom of Totem Pole

Central Research Question

The central research question for this study was, what are the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms? One-to-one paraeducators' voices revealed three themes within this study: the bottom of the totem pole, one-to-one paraeducators' uniqueness, and mental strain, all of which contributed to answering the central research question. The participants' perspectives were founded upon various aspects of their roles as one-to-one paraeducators. Every participant shared experiences of overwhelming stress but explained why their student makes it all worth the effort. Luna encompassed many one-to-one paraeducators' perspectives when she said,

> It is a hard job, a very hard job. It is not just the emotionally, physically, mentally, and emotionally draining hard work, but it is in my heart and in my mind [it is] a joy to be fatigued in those ways.

These emotional, physical, and mental stressors placed upon one-to-one paraeducators were usually expressed with difficulty. After all, they were placed at the bottom of the totem pole, which made them feel they could not make a difference because they were facing administrative issues, so the mental strain became a roadblock.

Even with the emotional, physical, and mental strain placed upon one-to-one paraeducators, they accredited their accomplishments to describe their student's accomplishments. Emma explained that one-to-one paraeducators "do what needs to get done for that student to succeed and put their success first." One-to-one paraeducators go above and beyond to ensure their students are on track for success, even if it requires an inconvenience. Sophia explained, "the mindset to kind of roll with the punches, maybe even literally [..] can be wearing," adding to the mental strain.

Sub-Question One

What do one-to-one paraeducators believe about their ability to support students with disabilities? Sub-question one sought to explore the impact of performance outcomes concerning one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy. This study found that one-to-one paraeducators believe that their confidence to successfully perform well and support students with disabilities blossoms over time but could be reinforced with practical training and a supportive team.

When one-to-one paraeducators are first hired, they do not feel confident in their role until after they have endured difficult experiences with consequences that force them to learn how to work with students profoundly impacted with disabilities. Isabella shared that,

> initially I really felt like I didn't have the experience to really, what I want to say, is get her to a next level, I wasn't sure of myself, how to do it, [… and] even at my age I love being trained on something.

Experienced paraeducators like Amelia also shared how intrigued she was with training; she even described it as helpful because it was "a confidence builder" for her. Each participant spoke about the benefits of training and then suggested it for new hires. Many participants even suggested student-specific training. Charlotte shared that students have "vital information" that should be shared with new one-to-one paraeducators for safety reasons.

While one-to-one paraeducators described the many components that featured the unique qualities of their roles, it became clear that many pieces of training were not helpful to their situations. Emma has been a one-to-one paraeducator with different students over the past ten years and explained how pieces of training are

> supposed to be this wonderful thing and most of it is useless to me for two reasons: 1) I've been in this game way too long, so a lot of it is redundant and repetitive and sort of

boring and 2) a lot of it is sounds good on paper, sounds good to the lawmakers who

make the training's [but] it is completely unrealistic.

Charlotte described that one-to-one paraeducators somewhat accept their differences when

trainings are unapplicable. She said, "We're, again, the ones who have fallen through the cracks

and it just kind of, you know, and salt to the wound when it's happened before." In interviews,

audio journals, and focus groups, participants explained how their unique roles often leave them

unheard and misunderstood from receiving support to be even more successful for their students.

Throughout her interview, Charlotte wished for support such as "proper training," and Joseph

explained the need for "better communication [...which] can support motivation and attitude."

Several participants, like Mia, commented concerning the lack of support for one-to-one

paraeducators "it's just sad," Luna described it as "discouraging."

Sub-Question Two

What do one-to-one paraeducators believe about the ability of their peers to execute the

courses of action required to support students with disabilities? This study revealed how one-to-

one paraeducators believe in the power of patience and being a part of a strong team gathered to

help students succeed. When asked about barriers that keep other one-to-one paraeducators from

being successful, participants hesitated and then spoke more about their own abilities than others.

Charlotte explained her hesitation, "I guess everyone has their own judgment of what makes

them feel successful or they feel like they got to win for the day."

Participants described how they sometimes feel stranded with their student, without team

support. Isabella shared, "it takes a village, as they say, and it really does. And I don't think any

of us have to do it alone or feel alone." During a focus group, participants encouraged each other

to practice self-care methods. Emma encouraged others in the focus group by stating,

We've got to start supporting each other as well. And realizing we've got to stop being

our own little islands and realize it works better if we're at least at the very least a chain

of islands and we connect. We've got to build some land bridges in there somewhere

because I think we'll burn out a lot less and can rely on each other a lot more.

Participants focused on their reliance on one another rather than negative aspects of others'

ability levels.

Each participant shared the importance of strong communication and patience with other

peer team members, not just students. Micah immediately said, "Patience! Patience, patience,

patience. You can't have enough patience in this job." Charlotte explained the importance of

communication with their peers by comparing, "If you have a broken wheel, […] that can derail

your whole system because it's a delicate balancing act."

Sub-Question Three

How do one-to-one paraeducators describe the job-related verbal encouragement they

receive from others? Participants' stories encompassed how they sometimes receive positive

feedback and sometimes receive negative feedback, but usually, they do not receive any

feedback. Participants recognize their nonexistent encouragement and share the repercussions as

they just want to be recognized.

Participants spotlighted verbal encouragement and persuasion throughout all data sources

but seemed reassured during focus groups because they could all relate with each other regarding

their nonexistent verbal feedback. Charlotte explained that "if people feel like people care about

you, you're more inclined to work really hard for them as opposed to like, well, they don't really

care." Emma passionately explained

When you at least acknowledge that [paraeducators are helpful], I'm more likely to jump

through hoops. I'll jump through any hoop you give me, but how big of a smile I have

and how far I go, is going to directly reflect whether you're treating me like I matter to

you. If you're just going to have more expectations and the only time I hear anything is

when I screwed it up, I'm probably only going to do exactly what you ask. But if you

seem to genuinely care about me and genuinely acknowledge the work that I do, I'm

going to take that bar and extend it.

Participants continually explained their desire for a simple "thank you." Isabella explained that

verbal feedback is something "I need to hear it because I think it helps me grow to kind of know

how to do better." The power that one-to-one paraeducators associated with verbal feedback was

crucial and impacted their roles. Without any recognition, participants felt that their hard work

was being ignored and unappreciated most of the time, especially during times of stress.

Sub-Question Four

How do one-to-one paraeducators describe their moods when reflecting on job-related

activities? This study revealed that one-to-one paraeducators exhibit a mood of compassion and

mental exhaustion when reflecting on their job-related activities. The words "stress" and

"anxiety" were used over one hundred times throughout participants' responses. Participants

described how powerful the impact of stress and anxiety is, but the power of being proud of their

student success keeps them coming back.

The stress that participants described created a toll on their health. During a focus group,

participants conversed about the physical and emotional stress they feel from the job, sometimes

creating hardship in their personal lives because they accidentally brought it home. Amelia

described exhaustion led her to

see that it distresses or causes anxiety with the students I'm working with, then that

makes me feel a little stressed because I don't want to have a student get really upset and

[…] when a student gets extreme anxiety that kind of gives me anxiety, too.

Half of the participants described having the right "mindset" keeps them driven to endure this

stress and anxiety to do well in their roles and continue helping their student.

Each participant described the compassion they have in helping students grow. Micah

explained,

whenever we get a kid to do something that they're normally not able to do themselves,

whether that's washing hands, whether that's using the bathroom by themselves, whether,

you know, picking up a pencil and writing the name for the first time, anything like that.

It's very uplifting, it's like, oh, you know, we're doing a good job, it's a good feeling good.

Ava shared how "when they see the light […] it makes me so excited." Sophia's compassion for

her students glowed when she shared, "I think it just makes you more emotional when they

succeed, if you just see that light bulb go off or you finally get a smile from the kid."

Summary

The participants shared how their personal experiences molded their role as one-to-one

paraeducators and why they were passionate about still helping students. The participants'

unique backgrounds and voices were shared as a foundation to their lived experiences, combined

into three main themes that explained how they felt, how their roles are so unique, and the

mental strain they battle every day while striving to provide a quality education for their student.

The participants' descriptions of being one-to-one paraeducators assisted in creating the themes

that guided answering the research questions. Each research question was answered by

considering the data sources, contributing themes, and participants' phenomena related to self-efficacy.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Chapter Five includes a discussion of the results and the interpretations of findings in this study. This chapter includes a summary of findings to revisit the study's research questions before discussing the data from an empirical and theoretical lens. The implications of this study are addressed theoretically, empirically, and practically, followed by the delimitations and limitations. Finally, recommendations for future research are explained.

Summary of Findings

This transcendental phenomenological study sought to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. The lived experiences of two men between the ages of 23 and 34 and nine women between the ages of 26 and 70 were explored through interviews with a questionnaire, audio journals, and focus groups, which aided in developing themes that guided answers to the research questions. Each research question considered Bandura's (1997c) four sources of self-efficacy and was finally addressed with the themes developed from participants' discussions. The following themes emerged from this research study include being at the bottom of the totem pole, one-to-one paraeducators' uniqueness, and mental strain.

Central Research Question

The central research question addresses the overall concept of self-efficacy through participants' lived stories considering Bandura's (1997a) four sources of self-efficacy. The guiding central research question for the study is: What are the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms? The lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators included a variety of scenarios that described their

frustrations and celebrations of supporting students in high school self-contained special education programs. Each participant described his or her joy when helping students reach goals, no matter how big or small the accomplishment seemed. As an integral part of their one-to-one students' program, participants wished they had the opportunity to give input to the IEP team when decisions were made. Most participants described how they felt more motivated to succeed when their hard work was recognized by others, especially teachers and administrators. Several participants recognized administrative issues, one important issue being that their wages were not appealing compared to their roles and responsibilities, but the student relationships brought them back every day. Finally, the stressful lived experiences were shared with the hopes for better training or clearer roles and responsibilities at the beginning and throughout their careers.

Sub-Question One (SQ1)

The first supporting research question accounts for self-efficacy's performance outcomes and asks what do one-to-one paraeducators believe about their ability to support students with disabilities? Participants described how their ability to support students with disabilities flourished over time, but in the beginning, participants felt anxious and overwhelmed. They did not know how to support students with disabilities; some participants did not even know what Autism was when they were hired. One-to-one paraeducators shared the benefits of hands-on training but recommended that newly hired one-to-one paraeducators receive training early in their careers. Participants shared how their ability to support students grew immensely over time as they created relationships with students and learned from other staff members. Both newer and experienced one-to-one paraeducators found that the most influential performance outcomes derived from seeing their student make progress and when they received recognition.

Sub-Question Two (SQ2)

Sub-question two asked, what do one-to-one paraeducators believe about the ability of their peers to execute the courses of action required to support students with disabilities? Participants hesitated when asked to compare their work abilities to other one-to-one paraeducators. Individuals' responses were very appreciative and encouraging of having a supportive team on which they could rely. Some participants relayed that being a part of a team came with some hiccups but suggested how communication could mend weaknesses. In a focus group, participants discussed helpful tactics to promote communication and build a strong team with other one-to-one paraeducators and classroom paraeducators.

Sub-Question Three (SQ3)

Sub-question three asked, how do one-to-one paraeducators describe the job-related verbal encouragement they receive from others? Participants shared how much they valued verbal encouragement from others and found it helpful when it was from other paraeducators. However, they seemed truly appreciative of receiving verbal encouragement from teachers and administrators. When speaking about verbal feedback, participants described how they were encouraged to work even harder for others because verbal encouragement promoted the feeling of competence and the feeling that they mattered. Although verbal encouragement was such a powerful movement, many one-to-one paraeducators shared the impact of the lack of encouragement they received.

Sub-Question Four (SQ4)

The last question, sub-question four, was, how do one-to-one paraeducators describe their moods when reflecting on job-related activities? Participants' stories were passionately shared about positive and negative times that stood apparent in participants' lives. These stories showed

compassion and frustration when reflecting on job-related events requiring them to make big decisions that will direct their student's behaviors and education. Even after sharing stories of disappointment, participants continued to share heartfelt compassion for supporting students to reach success, which helped them prevail.

Discussion

The discussion in this chapter includes a connection between the uniqueness of the participant's experiences of the phenomenon, being a one-to-one paraeducator in a high school self-contained special education program while considering the findings through theoretical, empirical, and practical discussion. Throughout participants' experiences shared through interviews, audio journals, and focus groups, their input had common themes that were significant to the study's findings and also aligned with previous research investigated prior to this study's data collection.

Theoretical

This study's foundation was built upon Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which illustrates the four sources of self-efficacy: performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback. Participants consistently shared that they are more optimistic about reaching a goal and working harder if they feel supported, aligning with Bandura's (1997a) self-efficacy theory. Research regarding one-to-one paraeducators has been overlooked (Azad et al., 2015), reflected through participants' stories as they shared how their lack of direction is often overlooked until they are absent. As participants shared their stories, components of their lives aligned with and reinforced Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy.

One-to-one paraeducators described how their performance outcomes changed over time. Each participant felt that in the beginning, they were thrown into a classroom to work with a student but received little-to-no direction about the students' needs. They explained how starting a job with no direction negatively impacted their confidence. Over time, many participants took ownership of their students' learning; therefore, they attributed their performance outcomes to their successes. This aligns with Bandura's claim that performance outcomes are the most influential source of self-efficacy because they are established from "authentic mastery experiences" (Bandura, 1986, p. 399). One-to-one paraeducators shared that they do not receive an informative annual review. They explained that the supervisor providing the review is someone who rarely observes their work ethic; therefore, they do not receive valuable performance feedback, causing a sense of carelessness regarding how supervisors and themselves view their performance outcomes. As every participant yearned to be simply appreciated, their values for performance outcomes were brought to light.

Participants were hesitant to compare themselves to other one-to-one paraeducators, which is interesting as there is less literature regarding vicarious experiences (Clark & Newberry, 2019). As participants reflected on their own experiences, they often referred to when they were newly hired one-to-one paraeducators and looked to others for direction or to learn through their modeling. This is consistent as individuals often develop their self-efficacy through vicarious experiences when they have less experience in a role (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018). Vicarious experiences are often modeled through observational learning (Garvis, 2011). Several participants preferred hands-on training as they progressed in their confidence as one-to-one paraeducators.

Throughout participants' stories and feelings about being on the bottom of the totem pole and feeling unvalued, several began to explain the components of self-efficacy without using the term "self-efficacy." Several one-to-one paraeducators communicated how they felt more valuable when given valuable verbal feedback. Verbal persuasion carries different significance depending on the "trustworthiness, credibility, and expertise of the person providing the persuasion" (Clark & Newberry, 2019, p. 35), exposed through participants' conversations. Several participants shared how verbal persuasion about one-to-one paraeducators has been disrespectful. They are treated like they are on the bottom of the totem pole and not respected as professionals, influencing their self-efficacy as a group (Arslan, 2013).

Participants described several physiological feedback components that primarily attributed to joy and stress. Most participants' responses attributed their stress to several components of mental strain: they are not supported or thanked for doing hard jobs, especially when they are said to work with students who present the most challenges. Conversations with participants continued to focus on the joy of their students for making progress, no matter how small or big; participants described that they celebrate all accomplishments to keep them and their students motivated.

Empirical

This study allowed one-to-one paraeducators to share their memoirs and explain the passions that motivate them. Findings are congruent with empirical literature and demonstrated throughout participants' lived experiences and common themes significant to the study's findings. The initial theme addresses how one-to-one paraeducators feel they are at the bottom of the totem pole. The next theme discusses the uniqueness of one-to-one paraeducators in what they do every day to support students with special needs. The final theme encompasses the mental

strain that one-to-one paraeducators have from the administrative issues and the lack of appreciation they receive.

One-to-One Paraeducators at the Bottom of the Totem Pole

The participants emotionally shared how happy they were to help students and yearned to support student programs more but are usually treated like they do not matter and are left out of developing their student's programs. Interview questions, audio journal prompts, and focus groups' guiding questions sparked a conversation about how one-to-one paraeducators feel undervalued and unheard at the bottom of the totem pole. Several participants shared feelings of inadequacy, supporting findings from other researchers (Hendrix et al., 2018). The contributing conversations that led to this theme incorporated the participants' conversations about being at the bottom of the totem pole and feeling at the bottom of a hierarchy system that did not value their position.

The input that formed this theme suggested that one-to-one paraeducators have difficulty finding value and demonstrating a needed component of their self-efficacy, which should be uplifted to better support students. Researchers have also found that teachers' self-efficacy influences student learning (Sheehey et al., 2018; Wheatley, 2002). While one-to-one paraeducators shared stories of being undervalued and unheard, they also made several suggestions and longed to be heard by their supervisors. Suggestions were regarding promoting one-to-one paraeducators into the school system and offering a valuable opportunity for their voice to help student programs. Consistent with the literature, participants also shared mixed verbal persuasion from professionals up the totem pole that one-to-one paraeducators receive little respect (Brock et al., 2017; Douglas et al., 2016; Sheehey et al., 2018).

One-to-One Paraeducators are Indeed Unique

Participants all shared how their roles differed from other one-to-one paraeducators and classroom paraeducators. The study's interview questions were designed to probe for input regarding the individual's roles and responsibilities; they successfully sparked several valuable conversations. When most participants were hired, they were unfamiliar or had skewed understandings of the roles and responsibilities of one-to-one paraeducators. They shared that they applied to help students but were quickly overwhelmed or anxious when they entered the classroom. This research supported other researchers' findings that there is indeed role ambiguity regarding one-to-one paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015; Sheehey et al., 2018).

One-to-one paraeducators described unique roles, including but not limited to assisting with students' educational, behavioral, and medical needs. These findings are consistent with previous research (Azad et al., 2015; Tews & Lupart, 2008). Participants' experiences revealed five key areas that begin to address the uniqueness of one-to-one paraeducators. These five key areas include 1) the special bond between one-to-one paraeducators and their student, 2) constant monitoring of student well-being, 3) deciphering and managing behaviors, 4) handling unanticipated surprises, and 5) ambiguous role descriptions.

One-to-one paraeducators face unique situations that do not always have protocols to follow. Most participants shared that they were not given any introductory training or manuals when they were hired; only one participant stumbled across a "paraeducator handbook" created by a local educational agency. Participants shared how they wished they could have received training before being thrown into the classroom. As students receive one-to-one paraeducators, the paraeducators have improper or no training before entering the classroom (Douglas et al., 2016; Hendrix et al., 2018).

Mental Strain that Challenges One-to-One Paraeducators

Some of the reasons that make one-to-one paraeducators unique are the reasons that place a mental strain on them. Participants described the stress and anxiety they experienced from various sources throughout all data sources. Many of the sources pointed to administrative issues that affected the self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators. Over half of the participants described scenarios that influenced their "confidence" to do their job. All participants wished they were simply appreciated in some form; most simply wished for a "thank you."

The spectrum of administrative issues that participants are exposed to should concern stakeholders. Participants described inadequate salary, lack of support and functional training, career accomplishments, and burnout, all consistent with sparse literature (Barnes et al., 2018; Ghere & York-Barre, 2007; Shyman, 2010). One-to-one paraeducators described anxiety when they were first placed in a classroom because of role ambiguity and lack of any practical training or information about the student they would be working alongside (Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Downing et al., 2000; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012).

Implications

The results of this study offer new insight into one-to-one paraeducators' lived experiences and self-efficacy to support decisions about policy and practices in the field of education. Empirical implications are discussed with consideration of previous research and how the research from this study shed new light on one-to-one paraeducators. These implications consider how important the findings are for one-to-one paraeducators and what this study may mean for their future. The following subsections discuss implications for policy and practice that should interest professionals and policymakers in education, including one-to-one paraeducators,

teachers, administrators, and even superintendents. The recommendations in this study are based on the participants' voices that may also apply to one-to-one paraeducators in other regions.

Theoretical Implications

This study used Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory's explanation of self-efficacy as a foundation to investigate the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators who support students in high school self-contained special education programs. Throughout the study, participants were asked questions during their interview, journal prompts, and focus groups that probed for specific experiences tied to Bandura's (1997a) four sources of self-efficacy: performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback.

When participants were asked probing questions about performance outcomes, many responded with reflections of various scenarios that positively and negatively impacted their sense of self-efficacy. Questions about vicarious experiences sparked discomfort in the participants' responses; many shared how they felt uncomfortable comparing themselves to others. Passionate responses regarding verbal persuasion led participants to explain the importance of positive feedback, encouraging them to work harder. Physiological feedback was evident through participants' stories as their body language, and verbal tone changed to describe their experiences and relationships with others. Participants were prompted to answer questions regarding the four sources of self-efficacy, and their responses did indeed address each source of self-efficacy.

Applying Bandura's (1997a) social cognitive theory with an emphasis on self-efficacy and the sources of self-efficacy was prominent in providing valuable input from participants regarding their lived experiences concerning their self-efficacy as one-to-one paraeducators. Intentionally designed questions probed at the appropriate stories of participants to pull their

lived experiences that significantly shaped their self-efficacy. The study expanded upon and supported Bandura's social cognitive theory, specifically how the sources of self-efficacy influence one's beliefs about one's capability to be successful. Participants were passionate about showing their feelings and sharing how the outcomes of their experiences influenced their self-efficacy, which kept them motivated to work hard every day. The study probed participants' thoughts to reflect upon their lived experiences considering the four sources of self-efficacy, which allowed them to reflect on aspects of themselves as one-to-one paraeducators. This may offer opportunities for future growth if utilized appropriately.

Empirical Implications

This study sought to fill the gap in research regarding one-to-one paraeducators, specifically in ways to support one-to-one paraeducators. This study continues to answer questions about one-to-one paraeducators and contributes to the field of special education. This section discusses the findings of this study concerning previous research studies regarding one-to-one paraeducators.

This study supports other research, stating that paraeducators have expressed feeling inadequate when responding to students with significant needs (Hendrix et al., 2018). One-to-one paraeducators often spend more time with their student than the teacher does (Giangreco, 2010), leaving the paraeducator in emotional exhaustion. Participants shared how involved they supported a student's program, which aligns with researchers who describe that one-to-one paraeducators "play a prominent role" in students' education (Sheehey et al., 2018, p. 44). Like other studies, this study found that paraeducators burn out quickly because of inadequate salary, lack of support and training, career accomplishments, and their role in the school hierarchy (Ghere & York-Barre, 2007; Shyman, 2010).

This research supports the fact that one-to-one paraeducators are inadequately trained to support students with severe disabilities. However, this research supports the concept that one-to-one paraeducators want the training and can be very successful because of the endless opportunities while working with the student throughout the entire school day. Previous research suggested that when trained, one-to-one paraeducators can impact student performance (Wheatley, 2002). Like others in previous studies, participants suggested that paraeducators need more training or may experience more job stressors (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2010; Hendrix et al., 2018; Sheehey et al., 2018). Several researchers have suggested that teachers' self-efficacy influences students' success; input shared from participants in this study supports that when one-to-one paraeducators are supported and have positive self-efficacy, they want to work harder for their students.

Previous research suggests the need for further investigation in the realm of one-to-one paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015; Sheehey et al., 2018; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). This research offered new insight into one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy that research has not yet offered. While staying on track to address one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy, this study supported Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which explained self-efficacy's influence on one's life.

Implications for Practice

To ensure that students' support staff are continually being supported to do their job to the best of their ability, it is recommended that school districts provide regular training and request feedback from participants to ensure the training is appropriate. This study found that participants favored training and wanted more that is relatable to one-to-one paraeducators, not just classroom paraeducators. Participants longed for others to respect their role as professionals. Finally, participants described the events that impacted their self-efficacy.

Training

      Professionals who have responsibilities to ensure high-quality education for students with disabilities should ensure one-to-one paraeducator preparation before entering classrooms. It is recommended that local associations and school districts collaborate to create onboard training and handbook specifically for the unique roles of one-to-one paraeducators. Local associations, such as regional educational service districts or state-level departments, may be qualified to support school districts by developing onboard training for paraeducators.

      Onboard training that would be helpful includes information about students with disabilities, best practices that support education and behavioral support for students with learning disabilities, classroom or district protocol, and how to support educational accommodations and modifications for students in the classroom. Most participants requested an informative onboard session regarding their student's needs, either from the previous one-to-one paraeducator or the teacher. This onboard training should accompany a handbook that one-to-one paraeducators may reference throughout their career. It would be beneficial for school districts to offer training during the professional development time or provide digital training opportunities that may be beneficial to one-to-one paraeducators when students have a late start or absence.

      For onboard training to be created effectively, school districts or state or federal guidelines may also need to create standards that clarify the roles and responsibilities of one-to-one paraeducators and accessible supports. A common misconception from several participants revolved around their unique roles and responsibilities, which were often questioned because their roles involved wearing so many hats that sometimes included teaching or nurse delegated duties. Currently, federal and state guidelines for one-to-one paraeducators' roles and responsibilities are vague. Better clarified roles and responsibilities would illuminate how one-

to-one paraeducators can support students rather than providing a list of what they can and cannot do apart from their job responsibilities/requirements.

Professionalizing the Role

The role of a one-to-one paraeducator is unique. A specialized delegate for the needs and voices of one-to-one paraeducators would offer the opportunity to provide insight to stakeholders. It is recognized that most one-to-one paraeducators work in this job because they have other jobs and family obligations, so this time commitment could be problematic or impossible. If a one-to-one paraeducator representative were available, stakeholders would have the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of needs, suggestions, and successes that one-to-one paraeducators experience daily.

Previous research has suggested that supervising teachers are also unfamiliar with paraeducators' roles and responsibilities along with how to support a team of adult paraeducators (Azad et al., 2015; Sheehey et al., 2018). Rather than ignoring one-to-one paraeducators' needs, it is recommended that special education teachers receive training to manage their adult team of paraeducators as professionals. Teacher-preparatory programs rarely prepare teachers to supervise and support paraeducators (Biggs et al., 2019). When a team feels competent and supported, their self-efficacy is often potent, influencing how they are seen as professionals. When teachers' self-efficacy is stronger, student success increases (Maheler et al., 2018; Usher & Pajares, 2008) which suggests that one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy may also influence student success. Although some literature challenges the effectiveness of one-to-one paraeducators, the literature does not address the changes that could be made to better one-to-one paraeducators. Improvements would benefit one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy and performance, benefiting student programs.

One-to-one paraeducators spend about six hours a day with their student, which means the paraeducator gets to know their student very well. Some participants described how they could easily determine what their students wanted throughout the day without them asking. This opportunity creates valuable insight about the student that the one-to-one paraeducators wish they could share with the IEP team. One-to-one paraeducators felt that they spend so much time with the student that it would be valuable to their student's program if they could be involved with the IEP team, allowing them to be informed about the student as a professional.

Impact of Self-Efficacy

To promote success in one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy, their performance outcomes must be understood and valued. Many participants shared that they barely had a relationship with the building administrator who gave them their evaluation at the end of the school year. They also shared that they did not believe their evaluating building administrator saw a true portrait of their work ethic and product. One-to-one paraeducators would benefit from a more personable evaluation that includes valuable feedback derived from someone who regularly observes their work. A team evaluation with the supervising teacher collaborating with the supervising administrator may be required to assist in observing and evaluating one-to-one paraeducators. Implementing this suggestion may also provide a more in-depth paraeducator evaluation process.

It is beneficial for individuals to assess their own progress when they have a standard to measure their performance. I recommend that when regional or state-level educational services create a training, they also create a rubric or evaluation tool that administrators can use with their paraeducators throughout the school year. An evaluation tool would allow paraeducators to understand their performance outcomes regularly to direct their self-efficacy. This would include

more feedback for paraeducators during the school year congruent to the teacher evaluation processes, which is an evidence-based practice.

Limitations and Delimitations

With consideration of the gap in research regarding one-to-one paraeducators, this phenomenological study was designed to aid in closing the gap along with understanding the self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators because of their unique assignments. Throughout this study, decisions were intentionally considered and conducted. The following explains delimitations deliberately executed and limitations that accompanied the study.

The delimitations of this study included the variety of the population. This study was limited to one-to-one paraeducators in high school self-contained special education programs who had at least one year of experience. This population was chosen for the study to focus on the exclusivity often categorized in the secondary level. The school district was chosen because of its large population of students, specifically those served in special education programs. Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, online meeting platforms were utilized to allow the researcher and participants to see each other's faces without masks to promote rapport and clarity. A transcendental phenomenological study was intentionally conducted in anticipation of capturing the participants' voices and lived experiences.

No research study is conducted without limitation. This study integrated 11 participants' voices and lived experiences, representing a small number of individuals, and should not be generalized to the larger population of one-to-one paraeducators. Furthermore, the participants of this study were employed by the same school district and were from the same geographical area in western Washington. This study filled the gap in the literature regarding one-to-one paraeducators. However, it would not be appropriate to generalize the findings with the lived

experiences of classroom paraeducators. Data were collected during an atypical school year, following distance learning because of COVID-19; therefore, one-to-one paraeducators' lived experiences may have been influenced differently that year. The abnormal year may have supported individuals' participation decisions; it may have also intruded on their comfort in sharing their entire stories and conveying body language or other social exchanges.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was designed in anticipation of investigating how to support one-to-one paraeducators. Like the little research available regarding one-to-one paraeducators, it is still evidently clear that further research regarding one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy is needed. Once one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy is better understood, recommendations for developing widespread one-to-one paraeducator support programs or training may be further developed to clarify best practices.

Policy and procedures are often misconstrued due to the common misconceptions of one-to-one paraeducators' roles and responsibilities. In the past, legal obligations, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and the IDEA of 2004, have pushed state-level education to establish training to support the growing number of one-to-one paraeducators. Although, this study, among others, suggests that one-to-one paraeducators are still not receiving the training they need. It is recommended that this study be replicated nationwide to include input from one-to-one paraeducators represented from each state. This could provide value with enough evidence to create valuable training for one-to-one paraeducators to support students with severe disabilities. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has begun by creating the Paraeducator Common Core Guidelines (Council for Exceptional Children,

2015), which are evidence-based practices that identify the knowledge and skills that paraeducators should have when working with students with disabilities.

The input from participants in this study opened a broader vision to understanding one-to-one paraeducators' perspectives. Obviously, it displayed the need to investigate one-to-one paraeducators' roles and needs further. To better understand the full concept of one-to-one paraeducators' experiences and the perceptions of one-to-one paraeducators from others, further investigation in the form of a case study would provide an encompassed insight. Along with prior literature, this study exposed the lack of knowledge individuals have of one-to-one paraeducators. This lack of knowledge exposed the lack of appreciation given to one-to-one paraeducators. In order to provide a deeper investigation into the perceptions of a one-to-one paraeducator and how others perceive them, it is recommended that a case study incorporating individuals working with one-to-one paraeducators, such as supervising teachers, other paraeducators, and administrators, specialists, parents, and the student be implemented. A study like this would allow a different lens on how to best one-to-one support paraeducators and, as a result, help student programs.

Conclusion

This transcendental phenomenological study was designed to investigate the lived experiences of one-to-one paraeducators considering their self-efficacy. Established research demonstrated an evident gap in the literature regarding one-to-one paraeducators. This gap in research suggested the need for further clarification on the roles and responsibilities of one-to-one paraeducators, along with the need to provide training. This research study was designed to fill the gap in the literature and offer evidence-based practices for supporting one-to-one paraeducators. Data triangulation included interviews with a self-efficacy questionnaire, audio

journals, and focus groups. The questions guiding data collection methods were designed using Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory's explanation of the four sources of self-efficacy. All participants shared experiences of overwhelming stress but followed up by explaining why their student makes it all worth the effort.

The data collection methods successfully gathered one-to-one paraeducators' shared experiences concerning the four sources of self-efficacy. The data collected was analyzed and concluded with this study's themes: bottom of the totem pole, one-to-one paraeducators' uniqueness, and mental strain. These themes aided in answering the study's central research question and sub-questions. When answering the central research question, the one-to-one paraeducators' lived experiences revealed the unique characteristics that passionate one-to-one paraeducators have so they can endure their frustrations and celebrations when supporting students in high school self-contained special education programs. The participants' perspectives were founded upon various aspects of their roles as one-to-one paraeducators, which explained how frustrations and joyful experiences motivated them to return to work and help students with disabilities.

The importance of one-to-one paraeducators' self-efficacy shined bright throughout the research. Participants yearned for opportunities to strengthen their self-efficacy through being better trained and prepared to support the students they taught every day. This study discovered that one-to-one paraeducators' perspectives are overwhelmed with stress but encompassed with why their student makes it all worth the effort. The findings in this study revealed an imminent need to support one-to-one paraeducators through the obvious issues that stakeholders have ignored because one-to-one paraeducators' are at the bottom of the totem pole.

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APPENDIX A: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 4, 2021

Deborah Schloemer
Sandra Battige

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-555 A Phenomenological Study Of One-To-One Paraeducators' Self-Efficacy In Self-Contained Special Education Programs

Dear Deborah Schloemer, Sandra Battige:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:
101(b):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of One-to-One Paraeducators' Self-Efficacy in Self-Contained Special Education Programs
Principal Investigator: Deborah Schloemer, M.Ed., Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years or older and have been assigned as a one-to-one paraeducator in the high school self-contained special education program for at least one academic school year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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 is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to discover the lived experiences of one-on-one paraeducators supporting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Complete a participant questionnaire with the researcher during an audio and video recorded interview with the researcher. The questionnaire and interview will take approximately forty-five minutes to complete.
2. Participate in an audio journal entry by answering 4 journal questions for five consecutive days. This will be performed on an audio recording app. This should be performed on your own time then shared with to the researcher's email through the audio recording app. It may take 3-5 minutes a day to answer the journal questions.
3. Participate in an audio and video recorded small group interview with 4-6 other one-to-one paraeducators from the school district. The focus group will take 45-60 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased knowledge of one-to-one paraeducators' perceptions based on their successes and needs. This may impact the trainings offered, program development, and success for students with one-to-one paraeducators.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.
Note: The researcher is a mandatory reporter. The mandatory reporting requirements include child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will be compensated a $100 Amazon gift card delivered through email for participating in this study.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a special education teacher in Mountain school district. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the school district will not be informed of your participation. The researcher serves as a supervising teacher to one-to-one paraeducators in Mountain school district. Responses in the study will not impact your employment as the transcriptions of the interview, questionnaire, audio journals, and focus groups will not be provided to your employer and all identifiable information will be immediately removed. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Mountain School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researchers conducting this study is Deborah Schloemer. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at   or   . You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Sandra Battige at

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher 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 have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX C: Letter Requesting List of Qualifying Potential Participants

Dear Principal,

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University who is conducting research in partial fulfillment of my doctorate in Special Education Curriculum and Instruction. My research is titled *A Phenomenological Study of One-to-one Paraeducators' Self-Efficacy in Self-Contained Special Education Programs*. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms.

I am writing to request a permission to work along your one-to-one paraeducators. With your permission to conduct research with your one-to-one paraeducators, I would like to request a list of potential participants who have worked as a one-to-one paraeducator in self-contained special education for at least 10 months (one academic year). I have attached a copy of my consent form for you to review. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Very respectfully,

Deborah Schloemer

APPENDIX D: Invitation to Invite Qualifying Participants

Dear One-to-One Paraeducator,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. You have been identified by your school principal as a potential participant for study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences and self-efficacy of one-to-one paraeducators assisting high school students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. I am writing to invite you to participate in this study on the perceptions of one-to-one paraeducators in high school self-contained special education programs.

If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in an online recorded interview, an online small group focus group discussion, and respond to four audio journal prompts for a course of five consecutive days. You should be able to complete participation in approximately two to three weeks. Your name and will be requested as part of your participation but will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used in place of your name in the study.

To participate, please review and complete the consent document. Once I receive your completed consent form, I will then contact you to schedule an interview and focus group. The consent form contains additional information about the research study. Please click on the link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Deborah Schloemer

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX E: Demographics and Efficacy Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest to participate in this research study. You were selected as a participant because you have been assigned as a one-to-one paraeducator through the school district for at least one academic year.

This survey is designed to provide a better understanding of the influences in your work as a one-to-one paraeducator.

If you have any questions, please email the researcher, Deborah Schloemer, at

* Required

First & Last Name *

Your answer

Gender *

○ Female

○ Male

○ Prefer not to say

Age *

○ 18-30

○ 31-40

○ 41-50

○ 51-60

○ 61-70

○ 70+

What is your highest level of education? *

○ High School Diploma or GED

○ Some College

○ Bachelors Degree

○ Graduate Degree

How many years have you been a one-to-one paraeducator? If applicable, please include time from previous districts. *

Your answer

In what type of classroom do you spend most of your time working? *

○ Self-contained classroom

○ Resource classroom

○ General education classroom

○ Other:

With consideration of your day-to-day activities as a one-to-one paraeducator, please complete the following questionnaire. *

	1-strongly disagree	2-disagree	3-neither agree or disagree	4-agree	5-strongly agree
I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.	○	○	○	○	○
When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	○	○	○	○	○
In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
I believe I can succeed at almost any endeavor to which I set my mind.	○	○	○	○	○
I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	○	○	○	○	○
Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	○	○	○	○	○

Thank you!

Your participation in this survey is very appreciated! We will keep your participation quick and easy throughout this study.

APPENDIX F: Participants' Demographics

Table 3.1

Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Years' Experience	Education	Age	Gender	Self-Efficacy Questionnaire
Amelia	4	Bachelor's	61-70	Female	33
Ava	7	Masters	61-70	Female	33
Charlotte	9	Some College	31-40	Female	37
Emma	10	Some College	31-40	Female	35
Harper	5	Bachelor's	18-30	Female	29
Isabella	3	Some College	70+	Female	34
Joseph	1.5	Masters	31-40	Male	38
Luna	8	Some College	51-60	Female	38
Mia	7	Some College	41-50	Female	34
Micah	2	Some College	18-30	Male	31
Sophia	6	High School	41-50	Female	31

Note: The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire is a Self-Score rated out of 40.

APPENDIX G: Directions for Online Interview & Focus Group

Dear One-to-One Paraeducator,

The interview and focus group will be held through an online meeting platform, *Google Meet.* You will receive an invitation for the day and time of each the interview and the focus group, along with a *Google Meet* link that you can click on for direct access.

1. Please be sure that you are logged into your district email. Logging in through your district email will ensure immediate access to the meeting.
2. The researcher will open the meeting three minutes prior to the start.
3. At the time of the meeting, please open the calendar invitation, which you can find in your email calendar. The Google Meet invitation link will be in the notes section.
4. Click on the link, and it should send you directly to the meeting page.
   a. If it does not send you directly to the meeting, you may go to https://meet.google.com/, then click "join a meeting" and enter the code provided in the calendar invite.
5. Once at the meeting page, please click join.
6. <u>When you join the meeting, please keep your camera on</u>.

If you have technical difficulties, please email

If you need to reschedule your interview or focus group, please email the researcher at as soon as possible.

Deborah Schloemer

Liberty University

APPENDIX H: Directions for Audio Journal

Dear One-to-one Paraeducator,

At the end of the school day, for five consecutive days please use the *Journify* app to record your responses to the questions below.

Directions to download Audio Journal platform

1. Download *Journify*
2. Sign up for the App as it prompts, you may use your work email.
3. Start your first recording, it will chime when it begins recording. Share your responses for each prompt below.
4. Once you are done sharing, stop the recording. Name the recording by date you have recorded responses toward.
5. Now you can view your Journal Entries. Under the play button is a share symbol. Share your recording audio (you may also share the Text/Transcript). Please share through email to
6. Please verify that you share five days.

Questions to answer daily:

1. What positive or negative influences impacted your performance as a one-to-one paraeducator today?
2. What verbal feedback indirectly or directly influenced your performance day?
3. Compared to other one-to-one paraeducators, how successful were you at doing your job to help students?
4. What feelings do you have about today's work experiences? Why?

APPENDIX I: Themes & Codes Count

Number of Codes to Themes

Theme	Code Numbers
Bottom of the Totem Pole	47
Undervalued and Unheard	3
Longing for a Voice	57
Bond with Their Students	25
One-to-One Paraeducators Uniqueness	57
Monitoring Student Well-Being	48
Deciphering and Managing Behaviors	12
Unanticipated Surprises	18
Ambiguous Role Descriptions	48
Mental Strain	16
Administrative Issues	26
Stress Creates Anxiety	26
Impact of Desires for Appreciation	15
Total	**398**

APPENDIX J: Field Note Excerpts

Researcher Journal Notes

Observation-when someone shared that they sometimes have self-doubt, they then shared they don't want to hurt students (this is when others started to nod agreeing). Could educational professionals support paraeducators with this by making them aware of their own self-efficacy and providing better evaluations?

Communication is important-everyone nodded in agreement

Administrators treats paraeducators like interchangeable parts

Good positive feedback between staff makes a big difference. I agree!

Participant shared that a scenario requires two adults, and it is the law? I've never heard of this; I need to look into this.

Practice a hands-on intervention training with your team-this is a great idea.

One-on-one paraeducators respect their administrators and are seeking a relationship with them but presented with barriers, such as access to them.