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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF DIVERSE
LEARNERS IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS WHO FAILED THE FINAL
EXAM IN READING AND COMPREHENSION AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

by

Carlyn Benjamin-Raymore

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of 12-15 participants in grades 7-9 who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Gorda school district. The central research question that guides this research is: What are the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year? The theories guiding this study are Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Albert Bandura's cognitive theory, as they connect to the experiences of diverse learners in the classroom and are related to diversity. A phenomenological approach was used to gather first-hand stories from individuals through face-to-face interaction. Also, a triangulation method was used to collect multiple sources of data. The data sources include classroom observations, interviews, and photographs. The data was coded through bracketing chunks and representations to create descriptions and analyze themes for the finding. Three themes and eight sub-themes emerged from the study. The themes emerged were instructional engagement, classroom management and social engagement. Based on the implications of finding teachers and stakeholders must be aware of the deficiencies that takes places in middles school classrooms and provide the necessary training and tools to help students succeed. Future research should be undertaken on all four public schools in the Virgin Islands school district to get a more comprehensive and accurate view of students lived experiences.

Keywords: culture, diverse learners, differentiated instructions, intervention, diverse classrooms

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, who inspired me throughout this voyage, and my late mother, who encouraged me to complete strong and believed in me. My husband, O'Neil, has been my rock and unflagging supporter over the years. I salute him. I applaud my father, Wilton, and siblings, Cardy, Carlson, Shernika, and Wildon, for being my source of strength and cheerleaders. Also, to my daughter, nieces, and nephews—O'Nyca, Jamella, Jannai, Hailey, J'Nissi, Savannah, Johannah, Arianna, Divine, Tyrese, Kayalee, Eliana, Israel, Kent, Zandi, Xarea, Xanelle, Shernelle, Donnia, Elisa, Jahrisa, Jordan, and Jahiem, I did it for you all to know that you can achieve greatness in whatever you do, so never give up.

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List of Abbreviations

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Diverse learners in middle school struggle with reading and comprehension skills. As such, teachers need answers that will aid in their students' success (Kim et al., 2017; Roembke, 2021). The chapter aims to address the lived experiences of diverse middle school students who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. The first section of the study introduces the background of relevant literature—historical, theoretical, and social contexts for the research problem. The second section highlights the self-situation which shares my motivation for conducting the study. Second, the problem statement and the purpose statement share the study's importance and the goal of the research. Then, the significance of the study describes the contribution of the study. The general research questions are stated, and the definition of important terms in the study are explained. Finally, the summary concludes the chapter by restating the problem and purpose of the study. The research question that guides this study is: What are the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year?

Background

Diversity in education is related to inclusive education as it embraces the differences of all students in the educational setting. Diverse students at the middle school level face challenges in reading comprehension, even though they have been exposed to vocabulary and comprehension skills at the foundational level. Hence, the population of diverse learners continues to increase, which also poses challenges as some students are not competent in English. Felder (2019) stated that the challenges that students from different backgrounds and academic abilities face must be tackled. Also, students who are not equipped with appropriate academic and social skills lack the opportunity to fully engage in classroom discussions (Wexler et al., 2020). The goal of teachers should be to adequately prepare students through

high-quality instructions and effective practices to increase academic performance. Thus, exploring the lived experiences of the learners would guide teachers as they prepare to meet their needs.

Historical Context

In the 1960s, diverse learners were seen as less significant and restricted from the general curriculum. In the 1970s, there was some improvement in the Rehabilitation Act. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act required that all students be given appropriate education. Later, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) introduced the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Schools were expected to implement this model so that students would receive quality instructions and their needs would be identified (Kourea et al., 2018).

Presently, in the United States, there is an increase in the diverse student population in the education system (Banks, 2016). These students are from various cultural backgrounds with different learning needs. The Common Core State Standards are used across the United States to improve foundational knowledge and students' readiness for college from elementary school. However, many students do not grasp the fundamental critical literacy skill at the early stage of learning (Sparapani et al., 2019). As a result, they continue to fail, a problem among diverse learners. Nevertheless, schools are encouraged to focus on the curriculum content that helps students understand and value the perspectives of other cultures (Banks, 2016). Understanding students' lived experiences could be essential when preparing for the curriculum content at the middle school level.

Social Context

If the barriers associated with diverse learning are not attended to at the initial stage of students' academic journey, students will continue to struggle at the higher level (Lorimer et al., 2017; Sparapani et al., 2019). On the other hand, when learners' basic needs are met, it becomes easier for them to scaffold other concepts in the future. At the foundational stage,

teachers need to ensure that students attain the basic skills to succeed. Lorimer et al. (2017) noted that teachers must see the need to increase the range of literacies and create connections between activities in the classroom and students' experiences. Since vocabulary building is a foundational tool that helps students develop competent comprehension skills, students' struggles with basic vocabulary content must focus on diverse learners (Gallagher et al., 2019). Students develop their literacy skills through constant and intentional interaction and engagement at home (Rayland & Grover, 2012) and in school in order to increase their knowledge and understanding (Gallagher et al., 2019). The downfall is that some teachers are not adequately trained to work with these students (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017), and parents depend on the school to help because they are capable of providing support (Hill et al., 2018). The variables such as labeling practices, students' participation, and teachers' attitudes towards students should be examined to present a positive learning environment that empowers diverse learners (Banks, 2016). Integrating explicit vocabulary instructions enable diverse middle school-level learners to connect to meanings and apply them in practice (Gallagher et al., 2019).

Theoretical Context

Socio-cultural theory and social cognitive theory are suitable theories for this topic. These theories inform how diverse learners' experiences and interactions would help them build on previous knowledge and skills that would impact their learning. However, limited research has addressed this topic (Tomlinson, 2017). Low-ability students who interact with advanced learners have the potential to excel (Wertsch, 1979). Thus, further research on the topic would help these struggling learners. The social cognitive theory proves that students will learn from each other when they interact. Through observation and interaction, students think and act accordingly (Schunk & Usher, 2019).

As they observe the behaviors of others and experience doing things, they learn. Additionally, the social-cultural theory from Eun (2016) shared the benefits of cultural and

social interaction among diverse learning social interactions. Students in diverse classrooms acquire knowledge through collaborating with others (Hill, 2020). My study extends the socio-cultural and social cognitive theories as students' social interactions influence students' development and learning. A learning environment centered around these theories would promote active learning with instructional strategies and evidence practices geared to maximize diverse learners' full potential. Social engagements in the classroom focused on connecting to students' cultural and academic needs encourage mass participation and build students' interest in the topic. These social interactions among diverse learners develop to influence cognitive growth. Since culture plays an important role in students' learning, intentional discussions, and constructive feedback on students' way of life would help students with instructional scaffolding, motivating them to communicate, think critically, and solve problems. Another theory that has been explored in similar studies is the schema theory. This schema theory was proposed by Fredric Bartlett, a British psychologist. Schema theory explains how stored memory from the past is linked and organized to guide individuals' cognitive process (Auhl & Bain, 2021). These past experiences help students to retrieve new information. This theory could be used to help diverse learners build on past knowledge, utilizing practices to build on their present situation.

Problem Statement

The problem is that diverse learners in middle school continue to score below level in reading comprehension and fluency despite remedial programs. According to Spence (2019), below-level students may progress but not reach their level at performance assessments. Larson et al. (2020) were concerned that the poor performance is due to a lack of differentiated instructions to meet these students' needs. Larson et al. further penned that there is a deficiency in differentiated instructions catered to students with diverse learning needs and the topic of diverse learners is under-researched (Hathaway & Fletcher, 2018). Although most of the researchers shared "what" strategies should be used and "when" they should be implemented,

there is a lack of "how" these strategies should be executed in instructions (Kourea et al., 2018). I examined the lived experiences of students in the middle school classrooms who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. After analyzing the problem, this study can make a difference because the diverse population in the United States continues to increase (Sinclair et al., 2018). Also, in discovering the problem, stakeholders would understand the issues of diverse learners and provide them with the needed support in reading and comprehension skills before it is too late.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grade seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district. At this stage in the research, diverse learners were defined as students from various backgrounds, groups, and experiences in the classroom with additional learning needs (Hathaway & Fletcher, 2018). The theories that guided this study were the sociocultural theory developed by Vygotsky and the social cognitive theory by Bandura. Social cognitive and sociocultural theory intertwine in learning activities to relate to social interaction among students (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020)

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to develop effective practices to improve students' success in reading comprehension and fluency at the middle school level. Thus, it is necessary to explore the lived experiences of students. Vygotsky's (1934) sociocultural theory argues that social interaction in a diverse classroom equips students with the skills to aid their future success (Eun, 2016). Another theory significant to the study is the social cognitive theory which defines human development through observation and interaction in an environment (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Diverse learners at the middle school level are expected to read and understand upper-level text that requires critical thinking (Wexler et al., 2020). However, they

continue to struggle with academic content. These learners would benefit from connecting the text to their observations and interaction with others in order to acquire knowledge and engage in the delivery of instruction (Martinez-Lincoln et al., 2021).

Theoretical Significance

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributed to the underpinnings of the problem. The problem that diverse students face in performing below grade level would be addressed. Diverse learners sometimes struggle to meet academic competencies (Elreda et al., 2022). Hence, when the sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory are applied to this study, answers would be provided for teachers to reach students at the point of their needs. The theories focus on students' learning.

Consequently, these theories will work together to inform educators on how sociocultural and social cognitive theory overlaps in situations to impact students learning through social interaction in the classroom (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). Students would collaborate and imitate learning in their environment (Keehne et al., 2018). Meaningful collaboration and social interactions among teachers and peers can aid their success. Learners observe and model the behavior of their teachers and peers as they acquire new behaviors from interactions and observing. Furthermore, a conducive and engaging climate where students work together and learn from each facilitates shared learning and knowledge from students' beliefs and values (Jellison et al., 2017).

Empirical Significance

From an empirical perspective, studies on diverse learning have not been readily available (Lorimer et al., 2017). More research on this area would help teachers understand students and attend to them. Additionally, more teachers need to take a more constructivist approach and show interest in learning about student culture to be able to relate to them (Cansiz & Cansiz, 2019). This approach would help students build their self-confidence and efficacy as teachers connect content to students' cultural backgrounds (Kourea et al., 2018).

Research has proven that diverse experiences impact students' interaction and improve students' learning and attitude (Lin et al., 2022). Thus, teachers' classroom environment makes a difference (Fante & Daiute, 2021; Wang & Lin, 2021). This phenomenological approach connected the participants' personal experiences to the literature that is already out there.

Practical Significance

Middle school learners continue to struggle and score below the proficiency level in state reading assessments (Kim et al., 2017; Roembke, 2021), and limited research is found on intervention practices used to support middle school learners (Powell & Gadke, 2018). Thus, from a practical perspective, the knowledge gathered from this study is important because the students from various backgrounds with different educational needs are enrolled in schools within the district. Research in education and diverse learning is not evident in this location. Hence, from this study, teachers would be guided on ways they can deal with students based on their lived experiences. As a result, students' performance and confidence would increase, which gives teachers a sense of satisfaction (Edyburn & Edyburn, 2021).

Also, this study aimed to sensitize teachers on practices to cater to the needs of diverse learners. This study would affect the wider community and higher learning institutions because students would be equipped to be productive citizens. Teachers and stakeholders in the district and other middle schools with a growing population of diverse learners would be provided with first-hand data on how they can address issues that students undergo and improve students' learning. Teachers would understand how limited integration of literacy and implementation of practices affects students' learning (Stevens et al., 2022). Integrating reading and comprehension practices improves students' understanding of reading comprehension and fluency (Gutierrez de Blume et al., 2021).

Research Questions

Research questions were the main questions that guided the research. At the end of the study, the goal was to answer these questions. These questions addressed the problem, helped stakeholders who work with diverse learners, and produced effective results.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year?

Sub-Question One

What are the academic experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?

Sub-Question Two

What are the social experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?

Sub-Question Three

What impact do students' lived experiences have on their performance in reading comprehension?

Definitions

The definitions in this section aimed to help the readers understand the study and avoid miscommunications.

1. *Culture*- culture is students' own experiences, practices, values, and approaches to learning in the classroom (Linan-Thompson et al., 2018).
2. *Differentiated instruction*- the teaching approach teachers use based on how students learn (Tomlinson, 2017).
3. *Diverse Classrooms*- an inclusive population of learners who bring different perspectives to their learning environment (Schuelka, 2019).

4. *Diverse learners*- students from various backgrounds, groups, and experiences in the classroom with different learning needs (Hathaway & Fletcher, 2018).
5. *Middle school classroom*- the stage of schooling between the primary and secondary level (Hill, 2018).
6. *Preservice teachers*- individuals training in the education program to be a teacher (Thomassen & Munthe, 2021).
7. *Strategies*- practices used to aid effective learning and help students understand the content (Linan-Thompson et al., 2018).

Summary

Based on chapter one, the lived experiences of diverse learners at the middle school level must be explored in order to provide them with the skills they need to progress throughout their educational journey. The background of the relevant literature was used to share through the historical, social, and theoretical context. In researching to find answers to the problem, the researcher used axiological and epistemological assumptions to explore students' lived experiences.

The problem is that diverse learners at the middle school level continue to fail reading comprehension despite remedial programs. As such, the purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. The gap in the research was a lack of reaching the needs of the diverse population in terms of comprehension and fluency. Thus, there was a need to explore the lived experiences of diverse learners at the middle school level and address the gap in the literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review highlights the problems that contribute to the struggle that diverse learners face at the middle school level despite being a part of a literacy program. The first section of the review introduces a theoretical framework of theories related to diversity. The sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory will be discussed in the initial section. The second section provides a narrative overview of current research practices for diverse learners in the middle school classroom. Last, the literature on instruction execution, interventions, and training to meet the needs of diverse learners at the middle school level is discussed.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that guided this study were the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). These two theories helped to connect the experiences of diverse learners' language development in the classroom (Hult, 2019). As such, the research questions in the data collection were intentionally carved to uncover the experiences that students undergo. The research questions were related to the social cognitive and sociocultural theory, as they unpacked how understanding students' experiences would provide tools to aid successful outcomes. When teachers use the social cognitive theory to extend learning, students explore their thoughts based on their experiences and social interaction while actively engaging in the task and language development (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Hult, 2019).

Sociocultural Theory

The theory presented in the review literature was the sociocultural theory by psychologist Vygotsky (1934). This theory informs that in an inclusive classroom, English Language Diverse Learners will learn through social interaction among peers with various abilities (Eun, 2016). The diverse learners would add to the rich and unique culture of the classroom. According to Eun (2016), the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky indicates that these

formal instructions in the classroom lead to students' development. Vygotsky spoke about this development that can teach diverse learners to think logically and critically.

Furthermore, Wertsch (1979) presented Vygotsky's theory on human development. In his article, when students with low abilities interact with advanced learners, they have the potential to excel. Vygotsky (1934) discovered that when individuals interact, they will learn from each other. Also, when students in a diverse setting interact with teachers and students, they become more competent in skills they struggle with (Eun, 2016). Hence, Vygotsky's sociocultural argues that social interaction in a diverse middle school classroom equips students with skills that would aid in future success.

Sociocultural theory is relevant to this study as students are influenced by their culture and their social interaction with others. Social interaction plays a significant role in students' development (Eun, 2021) as students range from homes with different levels of language development, problem-solving skills, and social interactions. This theory views learning as unified. Students gain knowledge through communication and collaboration (Albusaidi, 2019). Also, it embraces the study of diversity in understanding the power and uniqueness of cultural differences. As students gain knowledge of cultures in their classroom through social interactions, they develop a rich wealth of knowledge they can integrate into the learning process (Hill, 2020). The themes used to associate the sociocultural theory are human development and learning from interactions, psychological tools, and the zone of proximal development (Eun, 2021). As students socialize, they gain shared experiences from each other and connect with their peers. When interacting with others, it is an important tool to help them effectively communicate and understand the intended meaning (Albusaidi, 2019).

Furthermore, the zone of proximal development is a concept guided by Vygotsky. This model states that learning should take place within the zone of proximal development, where they are capable of working with guidance (Eun, 2021). At this stage, students are supported with social interactions and scaffolding. When students develop competence, they are

motivated to complete tasks (Hill, 2020). Also, the gradual release model built on the sociocultural theory (Fisher & Frey, 2008) supports the zone of proximal development as students learn through interaction and guided instructions until they develop a level of independence. The four stages addressed in this model are focus lesson, guided instructions, productive group work, and independent learning (Cimino, 2018). These stages eventually lead students to become confident learners over time as teachers gradually and intentionally create a shift in responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

The sociocultural theory has informed the topic because students are at various academic levels and require a structured learning environment to develop their language skills. Since concept development and language are connected, meaningful social interactions must be emulated in diverse classrooms (Eun, 2021). Their learning environment impacts students' performance. Hence, this theory informs the need to create a setting where teachers understand the needs of students and involve them in the learning process (Albusaidi, 2019). This study can potentially encourage teachers to seek professional development in language development and create an environment aligned with students' language development. (Eun, 2021).

Social Cognitive Theory

This social cognitive theory was proposed by Albert Bandura (1986), a Canadian-American psychologist. The social cognitive theory was known as the social learning theory in the 1960s. The social cognitive theory defines how the influence of others' behaviors can be imitated when observed and modeled. The theory also explains how individuals' environments and thoughts contribute to their learning (Espelage et al., 2018). The social cognitive theory emphasizes the importance of connecting experiences to the context as individuals acquire new knowledge through interaction (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Teachers and diverse learners can build on experiences as teachers use practices such as modeling and observation to engage learning. Students think about the action and respond as needed (Espelage et al., 2018). The theory can be utilized in the study to inform the teachers that diverse learners in the middle

school classroom can learn and extend their knowledge through observation and repetition of content by the teacher and other students. They are active learners influenced by their environment (Schunk & Usher, 2019).

The social cognitive theory applies to the topic as students learn from their social environment in a diverse classroom. They learn from watching other learners and imitating their behaviors in their social environment (Burns et al., 2018, Mertens et al., 2020, 2021). When learners are exposed to an environment where recognition and rewards are given to peers for their behaviors or performance, they are motivated and strive to model to receive similar rewards (Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020).

Six constructs were developed to explain the belief of social cognitive theory. First, reciprocal determinism states that students' behaviors are influenced by their social environment, personalities, and actual behaviors (Phillips & Orton, 1983). The environment that individuals engage in will determine their responses to a situation. Behavioral capability refers to individuals' ability to understand and perform skills. Performing the behaviors is achievable when the knowledge and skills are attained (Phillips & Orton, 1983). Observational learning is another model in social cognitive theory to explain the effect of model behaviors of others to reproduce similar behaviors (Ervin et al., 2018). Through demonstration and positive results, individuals will produce the expected results. The expectation refers to the individuals' expected behavior (Levi et al., 2014, 2013). The expectations of students can impact their success. Most often, the anticipated expectations are based on individuals' experiences in similar situations (Soodak & Podell, 2006). The reinforcement model in the social cognitive theory affects the likelihood of students continuing or discontinuing behaviors (Mertens et al., 2020, 2021). Positive and negative reinforcement will influence students' behavior in the future. Their level of confidence in performing a behavior is referred to as self-efficacy (Glessner et al., 2017). Students' self-efficacy level can impact their level of motivation, behaviors, and ability to be successful (Bandura, 1978).

The social cognitive theory can be used as a model in a diverse classroom as educators work to improve students' cognitive skills, behaviors, and social interactions. The model will help teachers understand how creating an environment that motivates, model, and engage learning will produce lifelong learners (Burns et al., 2018). Teachers will dig deep to implement suitable practices and construct structured models to guide students to interact, solve problems and succeed.

Sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory are suitable for this topic. They inform how diverse learners' interactions would help them build on experiences and skills that would impact their learning and language development (Hult, 2019). Although students are instructed in the resource classrooms at the middle level and provided with interventions, these theories intend to explain the problem that diverse learners experience in classrooms and how connecting their values and experience can shape their learning. Using sociocultural and social cognitive theory in a diverse middle school classroom will help teachers and students improve social interactions, open discussions, engagement, and self-efficacy. These practices will create an environment to boost diverse learners' participation and performance, as both theories are integral to understanding human development (Eun, 2019).

Related Literature

The literature related to diverse learning in the classroom shares knowledge on background studies so that the significance of this study would be understood. It is significant to prepare teachers to effectively address the needs of diverse learners as they engage students in an active learning community (Eun, 2016; Linan-Thompson et al., 2018; Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019). In relation to the educational level studied, a successful middle school is characterized by nurturing a diverse, active, and intentional learning environment and a challenging curriculum design that promotes integration and critical thinking (Terantion & Donovan, 2021). The various content and literature support the experiences of teachers and students and help fill the gap in the study. The critical argument under each heading further

explains how preservice teachers' preparation, differentiated instructions, students' engagement, collaboration, and professional development training have contributed to the experiences of diverse learners in the classroom.

Increase Students' Interest and Engagement

An active and engaging environment plays a major role in providing tailored instructions which cater to different instructional needs (Eun, 2016). Therefore, students must be active agents in the classroom (Schaefer, 2017). Differentiation guru Carol Ann Tomlinson (2017) expressed those students can be differentiated based on content, process, and product by using the materials they learned and appropriate activities to demonstrate their understanding. During engaging classroom instructions, students should be free to have a voice and make choices to motivate them to gain interest in the topic (Platt, 2019). Each child is unique, so their views and interests aid in appropriate accommodation and practices. Thus, in developing students' interest in learning, teachers' understanding and accepting their interests would give them ideas on how they can engage with students in the learning process (Rivera & Titu, 2021). A healthy relationship between teachers and students can determine their level of engagement (Quin, 2017). Hence, teachers must pay attention to how they engage students and build their interest. In the 21st century, many educators believe that game-based learning can help build students' interest and provide students with a successful learning experience. (Rowan, 2017). However, it is important to note that this form of technology should fit the learning goals. When technology is used as a shortcut in learning, students' learning goals can be hindered rather than enhanced (Hougham et al., 2018).

In highlighting the gap in the literature, diverse learners are mentioned in the review literature. Still, attention has not been given to how to deal with their diverse needs and provide a suitable environment and practices for them to succeed. Furthermore, in highlighting the sociocultural theory, Eun (2016) reminds educators that social interaction guides students' development and competency. Thus, teachers in a diverse learning environment must seek to

promote students' interest and high engagement to foster the development of diverse learners. Farmer et al. (2019) agree that managing the diverse needs of students can be challenging, but when done correctly, students are inspired to reach their highest potential. Hence, teachers are encouraged to develop strategies to create a climate that engages students and builds their interest.

Connect to Students' Interest

It is a major concern that educators at the middle school struggle to motivate students. Hence, the interests of students must be considered in the planning and teaching process. Alley (2019) shed some light on how autonomy supportive practices build students' interest by allowing them to make choices while engaging them in tasks that motivate them to learn. Students' learning experiences and interests are built upon their background and motivation (Bernacki & Walkington, 2018). The students' interests and the teachers' need to connect are paramount. Teachers concerned about students' learning needs are knowledgeable about students' interests; they are capable of utilizing students' differences to improve learning (Wynter_Hoyte et al., 2019). When instructions are integrated across the curriculum, students find it easier to add meaning to the instructions. Mawyer and Johnson (2019) further expound that using texts that interest students would increase their understanding and encourage them to solve problems through connection. Teachers who facilitate diverse learners provide opportunities to engage students' learning (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019). Connecting students' interest to learning enhances their experience (Hougham et al., 2018).

Thus, teachers must find ways to develop students' interest in learning materials. Students tend to be more engaged and focus on lessons when the learning materials interest them—as a result, increasing performance (Bernacki & Walkington, 2018). Williams-Diehm et al. (2018) added that the use of technology in the curriculum could increase the engagement and performance of diverse learners; thus, a program like TechNow can be used to train students in that area. Also, Winter (2018) found positive results in implementing a flipped

learning approach, where students are motivated through technology. Students would not feel pressure as they control their learning through meaningful interaction and collaboration.

Vygotsky (1934) believes that students can create their learning and be active learners when interacting with other students in the learning environment (Eun, 2016). The above climate can be achieved when teachers build healthy relationships with students and foster an active classroom community where students are engaged (Linan-Thompson et al., 2018). The term “context personalization” explains how integrating the out-of-school interests of students affects students’ learning (Bernacki & Walkington, 2018). When teachers create an active environment, they would learn about their students’ prior experiences and create personalized learning tasks to students’ needs. Lessons connected to students’ prior knowledge would stimulate learning outcomes, creating an individualized learning experience through intensive intervention. List et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine the role of students’ interest in the multiple uses of text in the lessons. They found that situational interest can positively affect students’ performance. Situational interest in students can develop their learning outcomes as students engage in personalized learning (Bernacki & Walkington, 2018). Using personalized learning, students are motivated (List et al., 2019).

Relate to Cultural Background

Since students come from different backgrounds and possess disabilities that would hinder their progress, teachers’ connection to students’ interests and regular engagement is encouraged. This diverse population of students undoubtedly brings strengths and shortcomings from their cultural backgrounds that can be used to help them be competent learners (Hall et al., 2017). However, a lack of teachers’ background knowledge of these diverse learners hinders even proficient language students with the skills needed to grasp content. Kim (2019) encouraged educators to participate in activities that would help diverse learners to reflect on their cultural experiences. Shared experiences allow students to

strengthen their literacy skills and improve academically (Lian-Thompson, 2018). These content literacy instructions also promote students' interest (Fenty & Brydon, 2017).

Diverse learners need continuous practice and interaction in a social environment that would help them to relate to their culture (Kim, 2019). An oppressive environment affects students' social and academic development (Ceballos et al., 2021). The sociocultural theory explains how social interaction and connecting to students' cultural backgrounds can build their interest and boost learning (Kim, 2019). The teachers' understanding facilitates differentiated instructions using sociocultural theory (Karimi & Nazari, 2021). Thus, the need to understand students' differences provides them with the best learning experience. The mode of delivery should empower students in a way that embraces their cultural background (Ceballos et al., 2021).

The classroom environment must feature resources to support students' cultural differences. As the population grows with an increasing amount of diverse young learners, resources should be relevant to students' cultural needs (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019). Students with diverse language backgrounds generally struggle with reading comprehension (Gallagher et al., 2019). As discussed in Cultural Relevant Pedagogy, teachers' use of students' prior knowledge, values, and identities in instructional practices empower students and gives them a sense of equality (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019). Hence, educators to activate students' background knowledge using explicit vocabulary instructions to integrate strategies into teaching content (Gallagher et al., 2019). When scaffolding instructions, teachers must understand the students' cultural backgrounds. Scaffolding allows teachers to discover students' differences and connect with them in the best way (Karimi & Nazari, 2021). Like scaffolding, extending instruction is a useful strategy that fosters the development of students' diverse interests by providing additional instruction based on students' interests and cultural backgrounds (Smets & Struyven 2018).

Rewards and Recognition

Diverse learners prefer their efforts to be recognized than their ability to complete given assignments (Pozas et al., 2020). Nevertheless, teachers continue to show eager interest in rewarding students for excellent knowledge level scores and not just trying. Kosheleva and Villaverde (2017) warned educators to be careful about taking that route. These researchers believe that students' effort must be rewarded because results have shown that students' performance increase when their mere efforts are rewarded. Another researcher added that students should be motivated by simply understanding the need for learning to succeed (Khalid Albalawi, 2018).

Serin (2018) explains this act as intrinsic motivation and the opposite as extrinsic motivation, i.e., completing the task to get a reward. Rewards are not only in the form of tangible tokens but by some words of motivation and expressions (Xue et al., 2020). Educators must be attentive to students' productivity and reward them in every aspect (Le et al., 2019) to make them feel like their human dignity and hard work are appreciated. Students endeavor to please their teachers and want to know that they achieve the goals that help them feel better about themselves (Xue et al., 2020). Imagine the struggling students who never get recognized by their teacher or do not get the ideal token at the end of the week. They work diligently on activities but do not get the grade based on their knowledge level. A discouraged student would not perform at their best and constantly remain at the bottom. In order to avoid failure, all efforts must be recognized (Pozas et al., (2020)

It is natural for students to crave rewards and recognition from their teachers (Xue et al., 2020), so teachers should be very strategic and intentional about distributing these achievements. The students must clearly discuss and understand the expectations of receiving these systems of achievements because teachers' expectations can influence students' success (Andersen, 2018). Pozas et al. (2020) expressed that most middle school students prefer silent praise for success. A simple recognition goes a long way, boosting students' confidence

(Kosheleva & Villaverde, 2017). When they are rewarded for being on-task, they are motivated to work hard to succeed (Jaquett et al., 2021).

Rewards and recognition encourage a positive classroom environment for both teachers and students. This climate motivates students to work at their best and maximize their success (Xue et al., 2020). Although some researchers believe improved academics reduce inappropriate behaviors, Jaquett et al. (2021) argued that is not always the case. For example, students are enthused when rewarded for completing a required amount on independent seatwork or a given task. Furthermore, rewards and recognition entuse students to participate in open discussions and share valuable input to their class lessons (Khalid Albalawi, 2018). Students would see that teachers honor their accomplishments by rewarding them when they learn the materials. Thus, this act would help students feel encouraged to interact, continue to work towards success, and encourage them to maximize their full potential in all their efforts (Serin, 2018).

Differentiated Instruction and Intervention

There has been a deficiency in using evidence strategies for diverse learners in recent years. Thus, differentiated instructions and intervention strategies were addressed to present various effective practices for struggling students (Larson et al., 2020). Differentiated instructions promote supportive practices in inclusive classrooms that can address the needs of the different levels of learners (Gheysens et al., 2021). These evidence-based practices are interchangeable with responsive teaching (Ankrum, 2017). These instructions are carefully planned to reflect students' experiences and strengthen their weaknesses. As such, initiatives such as RTI, Professional Learning Communities, Formative Assessments, and Special Education Programs are used to determine the level of differentiation strategies implemented in the classroom (Platt, 2019). As teachers implement universal design learning approaches, assignments are constructed to meet students' needs, and they are given equal opportunities to maximize success using various approaches (Edyburn & Edyburn, 2021).

Differentiated instruction is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a component of instructions that centers around students' needs based on their background knowledge and development (Ankrum, 2017). These instructions are geared to address the learning needs of students (Scarparolo & Subban, 2021). However, many teachers have challenges in implementing instructional strategies suitable for diverse learners. One of the challenges that teachers face is the result of them executing unprepared instructions at an infrequent rate (Pozas et al., 2020). Thus, teachers must see the need to increase the range of literacy activities and create a connection between activities in the classroom and students' experiences (Lorimer et al., 2017). Teachers practice intentional and explicit individualized instructions through differentiated instructions at the students' level. Unfortunately, some teachers are not knowledgeable about differentiating classroom instructions for diverse learners (Cho et al., 2020). Teachers should be given adequate training to provide students with the tools needed to succeed (Pozas et al., 2020). The teachers who understand the impact differentiation has on diverse learners and practice it are highly influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs (Scarparolo & Subban, 2020). Therefore, these teachers see the need to provide intervention practices.

To assist with intervention in a diverse classroom, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act has introduced the Response to Intervention (RTI) model (Kourea et al., 2018). This model caters to diverse learners. RTI is related to differentiated instructions as instructional practices focus on implementing academic skills to improve success (Ankrum., 2017). Executing lessons using the RTI framework is suitable for diverse learners at the middle school level because it provides high-quality instructions and the necessary intervention (Kourea et al., 2018). The RTI initiates early intervention to identify students with disabilities (Ankrum, 2017). It provides extra practice for students with disabilities and low-socioeconomic status backgrounds to use explicit and direct instruction models using intervention reading and differentiated instructions (Larson et al., 2020). Spence (2019) cautioned that below-level students might progress but not reach their level at performance

assessments. Hence, teachers must not get discouraged but continually work with students to perform at the best of their abilities.

Other intervention practices often used to help diverse learners through differentiated instructions are professional learning communities and formative assessment. In professional learning communities, educators collaborate to find effective ways to assess students' learning and formative assessment to help teachers check for students' understanding by observing and listening (Platt, 2019). Professional learning communities' high-impact teaching approach should be recognized in order to bring awareness to educators about strategies that can be used to deliver effective strategies (Hall et al., 2017). They believe these strategies, such as student-led discussions, collaborative learning activities, independent inquiry-based tasks, and self-and peer assessments, would improve students' interaction and performance across grade levels (Lobb, 2020). The goal of educators should be to develop professional learning communities (Fred et al., 2020) to enhance learning practices for differentiated instructions (De Neve & Devos, 2017).

Similarly, formative assessments track students' progress over time and plan learning activities to enrich students' learning (Kulasegaram & Rangachari, 2018). Unlike summative assessments, formative assessments provide a quick practice that provides feedback for students to assess their shortcomings and for the teacher to assess the best way to move forward (Leenknecht et al., 2021). These assessments immediately help teachers make important discoveries for diverse learners who need immediate attention. Heritage (2020) summed it up well when stating that professional learning benefits from formative assessments to help teachers evaluate and modify instructional goals.

Language Intervention

The choices of words teachers and students use to communicate can impact learning (Zacarian et al., 2020). Active discussions and engagement promote language development (Hall et al., 2017). Language intervention aid in the development of students to communicate

and improve academically. Diverse learners require appropriate and intentional language intervention in various aspects of student learning in order to attain success (Frike et al., 2017). Culturally and linguistically diverse, students respond to explicit instructions, classroom intervention, and routines (Larson et al., 2020). Thus, differentiated instructions in intervention rely on the frequency of sessions and presentation methods (Pozas et al., 2020). Thus, in order to meet the needs of students' explicit instructions and regular intervention are necessary. Explicit instructions and structured routines promote classroom engagement in a diverse classroom, which will eventually propel intervention students to work together to understand the text presented (Moore et al., 2019).

These language intervention skills are most helpful at the foundational stages of students' learning (Frike et al., 2017). It is deeper than just reading for a test or completing an assessment (Schaefer, 2017); it is about allowing students the opportunity to have a voice and respectfully share their views on topic discussions (Lobb, 2020). Vygotsky's theory informs teachers about deprived students in a formal inclusive education setting and how using suitable instructions and interactions can expand their knowledge. Despite students' differences in a classroom, language intervention resources should mirror practices that connect to students' experiences (Wissman, 2021). Language use strategies through connecting background knowledge and intentional conversations would benefit diverse middle school students who struggle to understand complex information (Terantino & Donovan, 2021).

Many students do not grasp the fundamental critical literacy skills at an early learning stage (Sparapani et al., 2019). Thus, teachers who understand that language is not just the basis for communicating and learning but also an important component of one's identity and respect students' language in the classroom are teachers that can make a difference for diverse learners (Lian-Thompson, 2018). Furthermore, these teachers would intentionally connect instructions to students' backgrounds to meet diverse students' literacy needs and use these enriched experiences during instructional time to scaffold students learning (Kourea et al., 2018).

Use of Hands-on Centers

The use of centers would be effective when intentional, planned, and consistent (Johnson et al., 2021). All learners can benefit from hands-on activities in centers (Bouck et al., 2018) as they further develop students' skills (Ha & Fang, 2018). It is comforting to note that a combination of activities in centers maintains all students' interests and propels them to be involved in learning activities (Wynter et al., 2019). Students can explore, support the retention of materials, and improve their understanding as they connect ideas. Learning centers are not only used at the lower level to support instructions, but they are necessary for middle schools to support diverse learners so that students learning styles would be targeted, thus meeting the needs of an inclusive classroom (Bouck et al., 2020). Educators at various levels use the necessary reading learning centers to aid learning in the quest to differentiate in the classroom. However, it is alarming to note that educators at the elementary level are more open to differentiated instructions than upper-level educators. In a study conducted by Gheysens et al. (2020), it was discovered that elementary teachers are more adaptive to implementing differentiated instructions more often, and there appears to be a deficiency in hands-on activities used after the elementary level (Johnson et al., 2021).

Teachers who believe in the practices are more confident to execute and get desired results in implementing differentiated instructions for learners. Primary level teachers' positive approach to differentiated instructions is influenced by their philosophy on these teaching practices (Gheysens et al., 2021). However, when considering the learning outcomes, the purpose of manipulative and how they are used in the learning process must be explained so that students confidently and correctly use the tools to maximize their learning (Johnson et al., 2021). As educators continue to encourage and teach diverse learners to think critically and understand the information in the learning process, Ha and Fang (2018) shared that physical and virtual manipulatives should be used to improve learning. They stated that the virtual and physical manipulatives provide interactive learning support for students' spatial skills. Bouck

et al. (2018) explicitly added that virtual and concrete manipulatives effectively support students with learning, but age and the level of accommodation are needed to select the most suitable manipulative.

Technological and Individualized Instructions

To meet the needs of diverse learners in this changing world and facilitate diverse learners at the foundational level, teachers must also provide the instructional tools and support for innovative and advanced students (Courduff et al., 2019). Thus, implementing the intervention is an effective practice in a diverse classroom; when students are motivated, their academic performance increases. These individualized instructions based on students' diverse needs help students to understand content areas (Linan-Thompson et al., 2018). During individualized instructions, teachers modify instructional practices, providing students immediate feedback. Diverse learners feel comfortable and successful in such environments, where they can participate in instructions and promote learning (Siefert et al., 2019). Furthermore, technological tools are used to monitor students' progress and provide relevant feedback. Teachers can save more time assessing students and interpreting information (Bondie et al., 2019) as they spend extensive time planning for an increased population of students' differentiated needs (Ankrum, 2017).

Games in the classrooms have gained recognition as teachers believe that students are more engaged in the lesson and provide students with a positive experience in a diverse setting. In addition, they provide learning support for middle school students (Hougham et al., 2018). Although games have gotten much attention lately, educators must note that the choices of games must be considered as they seek to meet students' educational needs. Some games can cause disruption and not be in context with the lesson (Rowan et al., 2017). Hence, the choices of games should be carefully selected and well planned in the lesson delivery.

Courduff et al. (2019) support the Technology Acceptance Model, which states that all students should meet the rigorous educational initiatives of using technology in the 21st

century. Moreover, technological instructions are alternative means for diverse learners to communicate and interact. Technology in a diverse classroom challenges teachers to harness our students' passion and provide a suitable learning experience for students as they heighten student engagement and participation (Thomas et al., 2018). This technological intervention supports target students learning needs (Barton et al., 2017) and should not be taught in isolation (Siefert et al., 2019). Integrating technology into the classroom environment could change the climate and students' performance (Thomas et al., 2018). Thus, educators should utilize technology to differentiate instructions and ensure that diverse students are successful (Courduff et al., 2019). Both teachers and students can gain the flexibility of expanding beyond the classroom and utilizing meaningful instructional sessions (Thomas et al., 2018).

Preparation for Preservice Teachers

Hathaway and Fletcher (2018) believe that from the "get-go," preservice teachers should be adequately trained with the services needed to impact diverse learners. However, are these teachers adequately trained in their education programs to meet the demand of learners in the classroom? As Thomassen and Munthe (2021) pointed out, teachers do not feel prepared to face diverse learners in the classroom. Being unprepared for diverse learners is detrimental to students' all-around development. Thus, the preparation of preservice in the teacher education programs is vital. Furthermore, preservice teachers with direct in-class experience would build the confidence to deal with diverse learners (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). Due to the lack of unpreparedness, it is argued that educational programs may not be utilizing suggestions that educational research shared on diverse learners (Thomassen & Munthe, 2021). Since diverse learning is an identifiable difference in students' learning (Hathaway & Fletcher, 2018), preservice teachers must be equipped and motivated to educate these students with quality instructional strategies. Furthermore, they must be taught how to incorporate the diverse learners' cultural experiences and live experiences (Cho et al., 2020). Thus, the planning and execution of the lessons would be more realistic and meaningful to students' lives.

When they are prepared, they tailor instructions to students' needs, and their performance increases. For preservice teachers to be ready and capable of curbing the deficiency in the classroom, they must gain the opportunity of student teaching experience (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). Whitaker and Valtierra believe that when preservice teachers are given concrete experiences, they can reflect on their abilities and explore areas of concern that they can work on to improve their skills. Sociocultural theory is aligned with preservice teachers' practices to organize their experiences and interaction with others around them (Sembiante et al., 2021). Although these preservice teachers might use their experiences and help with classroom instructions, their self-efficacy can make a difference in students' attitudes towards learning. Cho et al. (2020) explain that the level of self-efficacy of preservice teachers in a troubled situation would determine their commitment to using integrated practices.

Teacher's Experiences

Preservice teachers engage with students from various walks of life, and now more than ever, the diversity of the student population increases. Hence, the teachers' experience would influence their preparedness to meet the needs of diverse learners in the classroom. (Beutel et al., 2018). The work experiences, knowledge, and mentorship teachers gain from preservice programs secure classroom confidence (Beutel et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Subban, 2021). If this is the case, the more exposure and readiness teachers have in the reading processes, the more equipped they are to execute explicit interventions (Hikida et al., 2019). Not only do these teachers possess more readiness to instruct, but they understand, manage, and engage in positive classroom behaviors. Teachers' ability to interact effectively in classrooms would present minimal misbehavior and more opportunities for learning (Scarparolo & Subban, 2021). These components can be gained through the support of mentors and classroom teachers, providing preservice teachers the opportunity to acquire the competencies that would strengthen the teaching experience (Hikida et al., 2019).

The preservice teachers' experience with students from diverse groups would affect communication. Hence, there is a need for preservice teachers to be aware of diverse learners in the classroom and provide them equal opportunities to share their views. In addressing the inequality of diverse students in the classroom, preservice teachers must be prepared to build healthy relationships and understand students (Rivera & Titu, 2021). Thus, education programs must introduce teachers to practices that would give them valuable insights. When they are given the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge as professionals in training, their transition to the classrooms becomes easier (Thomassen & Munthe, 2021). Teachers' preparedness in the education program should provide meaningful experiences with the growing population of diverse learners. Research added that preparing preservice teachers through dialogue and first-hand experience is a powerful means of communication and understanding while respecting diversity (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019).

Content and Delivery

Furthermore, teachers should develop confidence in their ability to understand and deliver appropriate content to diverse learners (Rowan et al., 2021). Students who major in education should be exposed to practices that develop professional engagement with diverse learners during the teacher education program. The learning institutions that prepare preservice teachers on how to help teachers understand the learning process and apply the practices in the classroom are embedding practical skills (Carter, 2021). Furthermore, preservice teachers should be taught to deliver explicit teacher-led instructions so they would understand the need for modeling, guiding, and providing independent practices in a diverse setting. These practical experiences would strengthen preservice teachers' skills and drive to work with diverse learners (Carter, 2021; Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018).

Adequate knowledge of working with diverse learners helps teachers respond appropriately to academic needs (Rowan et al., 2021). Preservice teachers would not only be taught the material that needs to be executed to cater to students' differences but also how to

execute material to reach students' targeted needs (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). When instructions are not delivered clearly, students feel overwhelmed by the concept taught, and the end goals will not be attained (Ankrum, 2017). Therefore, instructional delivery should be well planned and executed. In this present era, content delivery would require a vast amount of technology integration. Students relate to technology, which in turn builds their learning needs. Hence, it is important for preservice teachers to partake in courses that would help them integrate their technological skills into teaching content (Siefert et al., 2019). For there to be a smooth delivery of content materials, preservice teachers must be trained to face the hiccups along the way. Lancaster and Bain (2020) agree that preservice teachers should be trained to overcome these challenges and attain mastery as educators.

Preservice teachers need the confidence and knowledge to deliver content, but they must support their instructions with evidence-based and current research. In research undertaken by Bondie et al. (2019), to achieve their goals, teachers are encouraged to change their instructional activities and provide students with more opportunities where the lessons are student-centered. When teachers direct their teaching strategies on practices that are proven to work, students are most likely to achieve success. Preservice teachers must be informed about the importance of understanding the strength and weaknesses of students as well as their exposure to content (Ankrum, 2017). They would not be able to navigate the journey of dealing with students with diverse needs if they had limited experience in teaching and learning (Carter, 2021).

Challenges

Teachers are faced with challenges that may hinder their instructions. Teachers constantly share the account of their challenges while working in a diverse classroom (Rowan et al., 2021). In diverse classrooms, teachers undergo many challenges and setbacks. These challenges are especially frustrating when students' lives are not similar to the teachers'

experiences (Rivera & Titu, 2021). When teachers do not understand students' culture, they may not feel comfortable addressing certain topics and questions.

Additionally, teachers face struggles as a result of the practices that they gained as preservice teachers from their mentors while in training, as some supervisors may not be knowledgeable enough to help work with diverse learners (Thomassen & Munthe, 2021). Teacher education programs are tasked with implementing practices that prepare them for the inclusive classroom (Coates et al., 2020). However, college programs' lack of connection and communication with in-service teachers and administrators heightens the challenges among preservice teachers. Collaboration among educators and mentors can help prepare preservice teachers and alleviate pitfalls (Hikida et al., 2019; Scarparolo & Subban, 2021). Preservice teachers' lack of guidance from experienced personnel and trained educators affects their experience, but it affects their belief in inclusive education. Thus, it is not surprising that preservice teachers' self-efficacy can influence students' performance and experience in the classroom (Metsala & Harkins, 2020). Preservice teachers who have direct interactions with diverse learners through observations and discussions can improve their confidence, thus improving their efficacy (Coates et al., 2020). It was noted that preservice teachers with a history of struggling academically or individuals who have difficulties tend to have a higher self-efficacy than preservice teachers who never had these encounters (Metsala & Harkins, 2020). Nevertheless, current practices can avoid these challenges and provide hope.

Paniagua (2017) shared hope when he urged teachers to understand students' language acquisition, focus on work they can relate to, and develop routine practices for students to follow. Teachers can create a suitable environment that can assist diverse students in reflecting on experiences and assignments that can change their course of action and be successful learners (Robertson et al., (2017). In the quest for creating a hopeful environment, it must be noted that practices that support exclusion and inequality have also caused separation and stigmatization in diverse classrooms (Rossa, 2017). These malpractices in the classroom are

detrimental to students' academic and social growth (Cho et al., 2020). Felder (2019) stated that the challenges faced by students of different backgrounds and academic abilities must be tackled. When these challenges are addressed with effective practices, the outcomes are rewarding. Intervention plans can facilitate strategies that work best for students based on their reported needs (Robertson et al., 2017). Other practices like collaboration can be used to understand and respect students' culture and backgrounds and provide quality interaction (Felder, 2019). Paniagua (2017) reminds teachers to follow the committed and caring approach because it is a softer approach that solves issues. If teachers were prepared for some of the challenges they now face in the classroom, they would address the situations more comfortably and appropriately (Rowan et al., 2021).

Collaboration Among Students and Teachers

The deficiency in evidence-based practices, which are ways to deal with diverse learners at the middle school level, is viewed as a gap in the literature addressed in this literature review. Creating a collaborative learning environment for teachers and students support students to work together and communicate information in the most respectful way (Alley, 2019). Collaboration among teachers and students in the classroom encourages students to appreciate individuals' experiences and differences, which is one way to address the gap in the literature (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

Collaboration helps to address the gap in the literature because it allows students to interact with others through play at the foundational level and creates an inclusive environment for students and teachers as they learn from each other (Felder, 2019). Collaboration brings an experience and view of the world from different angles to the table. Thus, this practice develops students' academic skills and social skills, and interaction with others. Paniagua (2017) summed it up well when he stated that these collaborative classrooms permit teachers to instruct new evidence-based practices and evaluate the expectations and impact of the diverse classroom.

Teachers and students can collaborate on information computer technology projects and other class activities. As teachers and students collaborate, they can learn from each other. Magen-Nagar et al. (2019) believe that creating technology projects can be a way to excite students of the 21st century, as they share ideas and communicate to solve problems. Teachers model what they want to see in their students in the classroom (Zacarian et al., 2020). Their collaboration is strengthened over time through constant communication and developing better working relationships (Magen-Nagar et al., 2019). In order to implement collaborative activities where students can reach their learning goals, teachers must promote a conducive learning environment to cater to diverse learners (Banse & Palacios, 2018).

Promote a Conducive Learning Environment

Appropriate measures need to be implemented in the classroom to cater to the increase in diversity (Sinclair et al., 2018). A suitable environment, instructional tools, eligible assessments, and understanding of students' diverse backgrounds can encourage collaboration while creating a smooth transition as the population grows. This environment should be an inclusive and equal learning space (Fite et al., 2020) where students are taught how to perform the assigned skills and clearly explain their designated roles in the group (Le et al., 2018, Zacarian et al., 2020). A gratifying and structured environment that promotes students' curiosity and interaction would increase students' ability to excel (Ceballos et al., 2021). Students would be compelled to be active learners and take responsibility for their learning goals (Lobb, 2020).

One method for motivating students is engaging them in peer-assisted learning (Thorius & Graff, 2018). They noted that this strategy assigns students to form a team by pairing. In this activity, the teams are awarded points for successfully completing the PALS activities and partner/team cooperation. This learning activity connects and educates diverse learners. Extended instruction is another strategy that plays a major role in providing tailored instruction that caters to different instructional needs in primary education (Smet & Struyven,

2018). These strategies can help students scaffold given tasks by identifying their knowledge gap and sharing resources that are most likely to support their specific learning needs (Lorimer et al., 2017). Another strategy that has proven to work for diverse learners is read-aloud routines which can enhance vocabulary and comprehension during core reading instruction to diverse students (Thorius & Graff, 2018). As students grow in an environment that encourages learning, they will develop the skills that would help them to become expert readers and interact with the text to develop meaning (Mawyer & Johnson, 2019).

In addition to presenting suitable instructional tools, teachers' behaviors can influence students' responses to learning. At the middle school level, students would benefit from caring and a well-managed classroom environment (Banse & Palacios, 2018). As students transition to middle school, there tends to be a decline in their academic performance. Thus, creating a safe environment helps present a safe setting where students can build positive relationships, share challenges, and attain thoughtful ideas through engagements (Alley, 2019). Diverse learners exposed to this environment would exhibit a high level of success. Students' high level of achievement in such a conducive environment can result from grit, persistence, and passion for meeting the end goal in diverse settings (Banse & Palacios, 2018).

Embraces Differences and Culture

In today's classroom environment, there is an increase in the diverse student population (Rossa, 2017). Thus, students and teachers need to embrace differences and learn from a rich culture. Although institutions have focused heavily on segregation and discrimination of students in diverse classrooms, laws and practices have been implemented to alleviate these issues and provide education for all (Paniagua, 2017). Notably, the impact of diversity is alarming as countries around the world are in an effort for all students to attain a quality education (Rossa, 2017). Robertson et al. (2017) warned that diversity should be embraced in the classroom. A diverse environment permits students and teachers to gather new experiences and explore new avenues (Laccina & Griffith, 2018).

Collaboration is paramount as stakeholders and governments move forward to boost diversity in special education. Governments are working hard to provide equal opportunities and deliver quality instructions and intervention through collaboration (Rossa, 2017). The stage is already set, so the educators' role is to make the necessary accommodations for diverse learners in the classroom while collaborating with these students and other stakeholders (Robertson et al., 2017). Thus, collaboration among all stakeholders would help deal with the deficiency in instructions that diverse learners face. This strong social support from all angles can positively impact the academic achievement of diverse learners (Baker, 2017).

Build Relationships

If collaborative groups are not well planned, instructional practices would negatively impact the learning goals in the classroom for both students and teachers, such as building relationships among students and teachers and developing academic and social skills (Le et al., 2018). Building student-teacher relationships might be deemed challenging, especially in diverse classrooms. However, some teachers are willing to navigate their differences with students to bring positive results (Rytivaara & Frelin, 2017). Since developing student-teacher relationships is part of the teaching profession, they are willing to go the extra mile to meet students at their point of need. Teachers must intentionally find ways to relate to students if they want to achieve these goals. They must take the opportunity to train students with the skills necessary to work in a collaborative group (Le et al., 2021). They would be more comfortable and produce better work if they are well-trained.

Teachers' commitment to their students would show up in their level of attrition. Teachers are more committed to the tasks when they understand the lives of their students and are attached to them (Rytivaara & Frelin, 2017). In turn, the teacher-student relationship can impact students' level of involvement in the classroom, such as academic achievement, behaviors, and attendance (Quin, 2017). Not only would the students and teacher feel rewarded when goals are being met, but other supporters outside of the classroom. Thus, developing a

strong relationship with students can go far beyond the classrooms, extend collaboration with parents, and impact learning outcomes (Rytivaara & Frelin, 2017). For example, a study by Wissman (2021) highlighted that a difficult learning environment could be transformed by connecting family and their language. These quality relationships can aid in the success of diverse learners.

Professional Development Training

First, it is necessary to understand that professional development differs somewhat from professional learning. Professional development training is usually an event done through lecturing and focuses on how teachers can grow in the profession. However, professional learning is an active and engaging learning session to improve students learning outcomes (Bergmark, 2020). Educators and administrators are a part of both professional practices. Professional development training among educators and administrators can impact knowledge from the growing population of diverse learners (Mellow et al., 2018). Thus, it is not only the onus of administrators and education ministries to plan professional opportunities, but the teachers' responsibility to initiate their development actions (Balushi, 2021), as these sessions are used for teachers' growth and continuous improvement in the learning process. Students are now competing globally, and practices are constantly evolving to address students' needs, so current teaching practices must be noted (Bergmark, 2020; Mellow et al., 2018).

Professional development sessions are forums educators use to gather current practices. Educators receive and engage in discussions through collaborative work. Portes et al. (2018) stated that small group conversation, which includes rich communication, facilitates learning; professional development training encourages professionals from similar disciplines and goals to learn from each other. Furthermore, it provides an avenue for growth and encouragement (Vogler & Prediger, 2017). Thus, it would not be ignored but encouraged. Professional development training opens doors for instructional conversation among teachers and promotes

meaningful reflection to make intentional adjustments and maximize instructions in a diverse learning environment (Portes et al., 2018).

Instructional Conservation

Professional development training allows for instructional conversation among professionals. These training sessions impact teachers' attitudes toward diverse learners (Mellom et al., 2018). The conversation should be teacher-driven so teachers feel empowered and excited about the knowledge they attain in the session (Bergmark, 2020). In order to transform the image of instructional conversations, further research should be taken to explore the instructional conversation model at different levels (Protes et al., 2018), so teachers can facilitate the development of diverse students' conversational skills. Mellom et al. (2018) found that professional development training in instructional conversation methods gives teachers a high level of acceptance for diverse learners and decreases the negative attitude towards students' learning. The institutional conversations are centered around experiences and academic goals needed to support the application of concepts in diverse classrooms (Portes et al., 2018) and the transfer of knowledge that students can relate to (Herrera et al., 2017). Teachers ensure that they make specific applications and reflections to the lesson while addressing students' needs (Vogler & Prediger, 2017). Additionally, Mellow et al. (2018) believe that instructional conversation is a vital teaching practice that guides instructions among diverse learners in the classroom.

Ongoing Practical Implications

Ongoing professional development sessions hold organizations together as professionals gain knowledge from experts and share effective practices to help organizational growth (Vogler & Prediger, 2017). Teachers who are more motivated to participate in developing practices are more inclined and effective in ongoing professional development training (Zhang et al., 2021). Since the methods of executing classroom instructions affect students' performance and effective practices explored, it is important that educators stay

abreast. Teachers' continued development and collaboration should adjust practices and make informed decisions about students learning (Bondie et al., 2019). Hence, ongoing and applied practices are recommended for a diverse learning environment. Furthermore, ongoing professional development sessions are necessary to keep teachers motivated and informed on tools that can be used to enhance their teaching (Magen-Nagar et al., 2019).

Teachers are appreciative of strategies that they deem practical for students' development. Hence, professional development sessions should be continuous and applicable so teachers can develop new instructional practices and transfer learning to diverse students (Balushi, 2021). Teachers can share strategies and resources that work for them and their students. Also, they can provide more immediate feedback and fresh insights during ongoing professional development. These practices would help new teachers gain a sense of preparedness and confidence, while traditional teachers and mentors learn innovative skills from new teachers. Previous research demonstrated that experienced teachers should be more challenged with innovative skills since they are less motivated (Zhang et al., 2021). Presenters must remember that in all they do, the sessions must be meaningful and designed to meet the needs of the classroom culture of teachers (Balushi, 2021). Ultimately, all teachers enhance their knowledge to groom diverse learners in this century further.

Meaningful Reflection

Zhou (2018) argues that teachers can overcome challenges through ongoing meaningful reflections. Meaningful reflection will help teachers build students' self-confidence and efficacy to adequately connect content to students' cultural backgrounds (Kourea et al., 2018). Professional development training encourages professionals to share and engage in meaningful reflection (Portes et al., 2018). Vogler and Prediger (2017) stated that while preparing preservice teachers for the classroom, experienced teachers should undergo professional development sessions to sharpen their skills, learn from colleagues through conversation and engage in meaningful reflection. In order to grow after a professional development session,

teachers must reflect on their experiences in the classroom (Zhou, 2018). The quality of reflection makes a difference, as teachers ask intentional questions to guide their thought (Lottor & Miller, 2017; Saric & Seth, 2017). This practice gives teachers an idea of what students are able to communicate and how to help students progress from one level to another (Vogler & Pregider, 2017). Studies on diverse learning in classrooms have not been readily available (Portes et al., 2018). Thus, more research in this area is needed to provide more evidence-based strategies for a specific level of education.

Meaningful reflections are important in the learning process. A supportive network is encouraged to help teachers reflect on practices as they ask questions and seek ways to improve classroom instructional practices and engagement (Saric & Seth, 2017). In essence, experienced or inexperienced teachers must not ignore meaningful reflections. When a problem in practices is identified, teachers take the necessary action and reteach by modifying practices to get optimum results (Zhou, 2018). Teachers get the opportunity to transform their students and lead them to success. This reflection may be time-consuming, but it is a worthwhile practice to stay on track (Lottor & Miller, 2017).

Social Factors and Influences

Across the United States, diverse learners are exposed to social factors that can negatively affect their success in the classroom (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). Social factors and influences such as relationships and networking, parental involvement, and enrichment activities can help to impact the lived experience of students and determine their achievements. These factors, in turn, affect students' academic performance (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Diverse learners encounter different and unique experiences. Hence, teachers must understand diverse students so they can be integrated into the classroom (Farmer et al., 2019). Students at the middle school level are at a critical stage of their development, and the struggle to deal with social issues can be complex. Therefore, intervention might be needed to

curb these problems (Ceballos et al., 2021). The results can be devastating if the issues are not addressed at the middle school level (Goldstein et al., 2020).

Some students at the middle school level have more support and a stable home environment, which increases their level of connection to teachers (Benner et al., 2017; Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). The type of support and the strength of the support that students receive in and out of their home circle can motivate them to achieve their academic goals (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). However, diverse students in these circles may encounter challenges such as low English proficiency, disabilities, immigrant status, cultural differences, and social issues (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). These struggles cause these diverse students to be disadvantaged, as they have to work extra hard compared to their peers. Hence, to reach the highest level of success, teachers will have to seek to understand students' social needs and the factors that influence their academic performance (Gonzales & Gael, 2017). The attempts to achieve these goals would be hard work and dedication, but they are achievable (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017).

Supportive Relationship and Networking

Supportive relationships and networking are essential to students' educational success (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Supportive relationships in school and strong support from positive friends reduce the trauma and social conflicts and increase the performance of students in middle school (Benner et al., 2017). Teachers are not equipped to connect with students (Gonzalez & Gabel, 2017). Teachers must realize that connecting with students is important, but they should also consider working with students to develop the skills necessary to promote success (Farmer et al., 2019). This positive working environment encourages participation and increased ability (Ceballos et al., 2021). Students are more susceptible to struggle as they transition to high school, so a supportive learning environment is necessary (Goldstein et al., 2020; Benner et al., 2017). Despite students' struggles at school, their support relationships and networks must know they can impact. The relationship between the school

and other family networks influences students' ability to resist peer pressure (Goldstein et al., 2020). Thus, teachers and other stakeholders to pay attention to their support, as extensive pressure on young people may de-motivate them and affect their success (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Students' level of influence is connected to social support and supportive network (Goldstein et al., 2020). Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) agree that the relationship between the school and family motivates students to be successful.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement requires that parents play an active role in the lives of students' academic growth and development (Antony-Newman, 2019). Sadly, there is a lack of parental involvement in the lives of diverse learners, and it becomes more difficult at the middle school level (Hill et al., 2018). Parents are children's role model and motivators. Thus, parents' influence on students must not be underestimated. Parents' interest in students' academic motivate students and give them the confidence they need throughout the middle school journey. Diverse learners are no different; they need parental support more than ever. A lack of parental involvement can lead to neglect and added social issues. Parental involvement in students' academic affairs at school can boost students' success (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Schools can play their part in helping parents to help middle school students to maximize their potential (Hill et al., 2018).

Additionally, students' social structure would influence parents' level of involvement in school activities. For example, less fortunate students tend to show less interest in their learning than other students (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). A study undertaken by Hill et al. (2018) revealed that students' success aligns with communication, support, and guidance that leads them in the right direction. Diverse students need that support at all levels. However, parents' involvement decreases as students move to middle school (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). As students progress through the middle school level, educators must be reminded that it is important to reach out to parents, especially parents of diverse

students. These parents may not feel the welcome and warmth of the school culture because they are not confident about their capabilities (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). Some parents are challenged by their lack of knowledge and level of communication (Cheatham & Lim-Mullins, 2018). Hence, schools need to take responsibility for finding the best and most suitable means of getting parents effectively involved in the children's learning (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017).

Teachers can open the door to teacher-parent conferences to understand parents using supportive dialogues (Cheatham & Lim-Mullins, 2018). Teachers' contact with parents is intentional and should be cognizant of the literacy level in the content message sent to parents because some messages may further distant and frustrate them (Antony-Newmann, 2019). Parental involvement is important for the success of diverse learners, so teachers should do their best to cater to all learners. Some teachers are incompetent and unprepared to communicate with diverse parents (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). In-service teachers and preservice teachers can make a difference for diverse learners, so proper training on strategies for responding to students' needs is highly recommended.

Enrichment Activities

Enrichment activities give students new experiences to be engaged and think critically, as teachers utilize various learning and teaching styles (Guffey et al., 2020). Research on diverse learners in middle school revealed that these students benefit from enrichment activities that expose them to interactive activities and critical thinking, which boost their social skills (Lopez-Aymes et al., 2020). These activities should be meaningful to enrich students' self-development. Integrate purposeful and interesting activities that develop the skills and lead them to career fields (Abbott, 2017). Thus, activities should be well-planned and foster collaboration (Guffey et al., 2022).

Rich and intentional developmental activities promote resilience in students to overcome negative social influence (Lopez-Aymes et al., 2020). Abbott (2017) shared some enrichment services that middle school students can be involved in, i.e., raising funds to help

the need of poverty-stricken countries on projects; or building their language competency by tutoring the primary school students in the community. Enrichment activities for diverse learners can also take place during the summer sessions. Summer enrichment improves less privileged students' learning and academic development (Guffey et al., 2020).

Summary

Based on the literature review, diverse learners in middle school needs are not adequately met in reading comprehension, and teachers are looking for answers to prevent this deficiency. Hence, the gap in the research was a lack of reaching the needs of the diverse population of learners at the middle school level in reading comprehension and fluency. The sociocultural theory and the social cognitive theory were highlighted in this review of the literature. These theories were used to notify professionals that students' experiences can influence students' and teachers' learning. Notably, implementing explicit instructions and practices in middle school classrooms requires preparation, engagement, collaboration, and training.

Additionally, to meet the needs of diverse learners, teachers need to focus on differentiated instructions and intervention instructions to help students connect to their interests and lived experiences. By exploring the lived experience of the diverse learners at the middle school level, who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year, teachers would be more equipped to understand the issues diverse learners face and provide the needed support for them to succeed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of students in grades 7-9 who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. In this chapter, I will discuss the type and the research design used in the study. Then, the researcher will highlight the research questions and the setting of the study. Furthermore, I will share the participants and setting used to conduct the study. Also, I will explain the role of the researcher, the procedure, and the data collection techniques in the research. Then, the data from the data collection are analyzed in detail to generate the findings from the study. Finally, the researcher focuses on trustworthiness and ethical consideration to ensure credibility and confidentiality in the study.

Research Design

In this qualitative study, the transcendental phenomenology by Husserl (Moustakas, 1994) was developed. This qualitative study gathered in-depth information on students' social and academic experiences as diverse learners. The data was collected in a natural setting while students share their perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach were used to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research explores and understands the meaning of individuals using open-ended interview questions to develop themes and make interpretations. The researcher ensured that the data collected from the participants' experiences provide clear and detailed descriptions that share the essence of their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, qualitative research was suitable for this study as the researcher sought to explore the phenomena and depend on the participants' views to make valid interpretations. Also, due to a lack of research on the perspectives of diverse learners in grades 7-9 in comprehension and fluency, it was necessary to examine lived experiences and make connections to their views. Therefore, this qualitative approach was a valid design for this study because the goal was to

gather effective practices that provide high-quality instructions in the classroom, thus, increasing the academic performance of diverse learners in reading comprehension and fluency.

Additionally, a phenomenological approach was suitable for this study. Several middle school students who experienced a similar phenomenon were involved in the study. This approach used a systematic approach to understand the participants' experiences and gather data on the phenomenon (Durdella, 2019). Moustakas (1994) added that as the researchers immerse themselves in the participants' lived experiences, they derive meanings from their experiences. The researcher asked in-depth questions to collect information on the participants' perspectives on diverse learning in middle school classrooms. First, the researcher used an inductive process, then the deductive method to see if additional data is needed for the study. The philosophical assumption that influences the practice in my research is a constructivist worldview. This approach presented subjective meanings of the participants' experiences as the researcher interacted with the individuals to make sense of their world through the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before starting the interview process, the researcher ensured that the participants are comfortable by engaging in a social conversation (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) affirmed that this transcendental phenomenology is an intentional act to provide the rich experiences of participants related to the problem. In this study, transcendental phenomenology was used instead of a hermeneutic. The researcher aimed to gather unbiased information rather than to make a personal interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, a transcendental phenomenology bracketed biases and presumptions the researcher had. The Greek word *Epoche* is used by Moustakas (1994) to explain the investigator's role to set aside any judgment on the phenomenon which affects the validity of the study. After the data was collected, the researcher then condensed the data collected into statements to develop themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). For example, the

experiences of the diverse learners in the middle school classroom were viewed as new to me, as I work as a special education elementary teacher. If the perceptions are not bracketed, then the interpretation of the study lack transparency and accuracy (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year?

Sub-Question One

What are the academic experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?

Sub-Question Two

What are the social experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?

Sub-Question Three

What impact do students' lived experiences have on their performance in reading comprehension?

Setting and Participants

In order to explore the phenomenon of the study in-depth, the researcher would purposefully select the setting and the participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Durdella (2019) explained that the site and the participants overlap because the setting is where we get the sample of the participants. The participants in the study would entail middle school diverse students in grades 7-9 who would be observed and interviewed.

Setting

The setting of the study was a public middle school in the central area of the Virgin Islands School District. The organizational structure has a simple workflow. The principals and a leadership team lead the school. The team includes subject teachers within the grade levels and a representative from the local board of education. The local board of education makes the

final decision. The focus of the study would be on the participants' perceptions of the courses across the curriculum, especially reading comprehension. This setting was selected because it is the district's largest and only public middle school. The school houses diverse learners in an inclusive setting and provides certain reading accommodations. The middle school is joined with the high school, and they share a principal, an assistant principal, a guidance counselor, and specialist teachers. Also, I work as the special education coordinator within the school district and collaborate with the middle school on a professional level. The middle school is the island's most diverse and only public school. Thus, this setting will provide me with more information than other schools in the district.

Furthermore, I have been working in this district for approximately four years. The school comprises about 155 middle school-aged students. In the district, 98% of the students are black, 1.5% are Hispanics, and 0.5% belong to other ethnic groups. More than 40% of the students are from a low socioeconomic background. Most teachers are trained with a bachelor's degree, and few teachers have their master's degree. The researcher was eager to find ways to improve their learning. This study would present first-hand learning ideas as students' lived experiences are gathered. The students' views would help steer the way forward.

Participants

The participants in this study were intentionally selected from a diverse learning population of seventh-grade to ninth-grade students in the only public middle school in the area. The sample size of 12-15 was suitable for a qualitative study to meet data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, the sample size for the study included 12-15 participants between the ages of 12 and 16 who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of school year. The study was a mix of male and female students from a predominantly black community. Purposive sampling was selected because the focus was on a specific group of learners the researcher has some knowledge (Akcamete & Dagli Gokbulut., 2018).

Additionally, this sampling provided detailed and quality information from participants. Since the researcher was knowledgeable about the sample selections, the criteria for selection that increased the validity and reliability of the data would be carefully considered. Also, convenience sampling was chosen in the selection process because of the availability of the participants and accessibility of data (Akcamete & Dagli Gokbulut, 2018). The researcher lives and works at a school within the district so it would be cost-effective.

Researcher Positionality

The motivation for conducting this study was to explore students' perceptions of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension. The philosophical assumptions I mainly brought to this research were the axiological and epistemological assumptions. The epistemological assumption explains the impact of cultural backgrounds and social relations on the study, while the axiological assumption allows me to share my personal experiences and biases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The worldview closely aligned with my motivation to conduct the research is constructivism, as students' backgrounds guide how they interpret information in the classroom. Interactions and experience would help me understand the participants setting and construct meaning based on experience.

Interpretive Framework

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the interpretative framework is how the study would be conducted. They identified these qualitative frameworks as post-positivism, social constructivism, pragmatism, postmodernism, disability theory, feminist and critical theories. I used the social constructivism framework for this qualitative research study. The social constructivism framework assumes that individuals lived experiences influence their social interaction and knowledge. This framework guided my study as I explore the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms.

Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell and Poth (2018) shared three philosophical assumptions used in qualitative research- *ontological, epistemological, and axiological*. These three theoretical assumptions influence how I collected and analyzed data in my research. My belief systems guided my approach to undertaking this study and how others view the study. I will discuss each assumption in detail and explain how they apply to my research.

Ontological Assumption

An ontological assumption is characterized by multiple views and the nature of realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As I gathered multiple views from the participants on their experience in the diverse classroom, I understood the different perspectives and how they view the topic. Participants' views guided me in developing themes in the study. As a Christian, the assumption of multiple realities opposes my views that there is one universal reality. The ontological assumption involves beliefs about the nature of reality.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption discusses the need to get close to the participants. The data for the study is gathered through observations. I spent time in the classroom to gain knowledge as I sought to collect first-hand information by clearly reporting subjective experiences. I spent one hour every week in the classroom observing the field participants for three weeks. I asked myself the three questions that Creswell and Poth (2018) proposed- what counts as knowledge? How are the claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched? My epistemological assumption is based on my experiences as a special education teacher at various levels. I have known students who struggled through their educational journey due to academic limitations, social issues, and cultural differences. In order for me to attain accurate information that will guide educators as they meet students' needs, I must bracket my past experiences and preconceived ideas on the topic.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption describes the extent to which researcher values are known and brought into a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). If I focus on my views and values, the study would be affected, resulting in a biased report. For example, I bracketed these views as a special education teacher who views classroom structure, organization, practices, and technological integration as valuable for learning in a classroom environment. I always consider students' needs and make accommodations for them to succeed, even if it means providing reading assistance or extra time for students to complete assignments. Also, I will implement student-centered lessons where students would engage in hands-on activities and collaborative learning where they learn from each other and plays a role in the process.

On the other hand, as I evaluate teachers at various levels, I have seen different teaching styles and practices that may impede learning in diverse classrooms. However, as I collect data in this study, I must have a renewed perspective on the study under investigation and put to rest all my experiences on the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Since I work with other students in the district, I bracketed information that compromised the study. Also, I reminded myself of the effectiveness of the study and the positive impact it would have on students' development.

Researcher's Role

I am an elementary special education teacher and the IEP Case Manager in Virgin Gorda School District (Pseudonyms). I have been an educator for 14 years but a special education teacher for nine years. The participants in the study attend the largest public middle school in the district. I have a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a master's degree in Education. I would gather multiple student views while observing diverse learners in the natural environment. I may have encountered some of these participants while they were at the elementary level. However, I have no personal relationship with the participants or power over them. Since my research is transcendental phenomenology, I eliminated all my experiences and view fresh experiences openly (Moustakas, 1994). Students used memes to describe their

experiences. Also, I constructed open-ended questions that directed participants to share detailed experiences and data necessary to address the phenomenon in the study. As a human instrument in the study, I conducted interviews and observations in a natural setting. Furthermore, as a primary instrument in the study, I used my five senses to gather and analyze data to ensure that the information is trustworthy and accurate.

Procedures

First, I secured approval from the IRB for my research. After approval from the IRB, I collected data. As advised in my doctoral study, experts in the field will review the questions before the proposal defense. The participants for the study were purposefully selected based on criteria. They fitted in the bracket of diverse learners. Diverse learners are students from various backgrounds, groups, and experiences in the classroom with various learning needs (Hathaway & Fletcher, 2018). I created an interview and observation schedule and distributed it to the teachers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed after the interviews. Then the data was analyzed and coded to develop themes.

Permissions

First, permission was granted to use the site for study, as approval must be given from the IRB before data collection. Since minors were part of the interview process, I secured permission from IRB to protect their rights (Appendix A). Appendix B entails a permission letter to the chief education officer to gain access to use the site for the study. I wrote a letter to the ministry of education to obtain permission to conduct the study. Once permission was granted from the education officer in the ministry, a copy was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty and added to the appendix list. After approval was granted from IRB, the approval was added to the appendix (See Appendix A). Next, consent and assent forms were sent to the parents and students to seek approval to participate in the study (See Appendix D and E). The signed copies were returned. Once the permissions were approved, the students

submitted a photograph with their meme to the interviewer and were interviewed. Then they were observed during class sessions.

Recruitment Plan

The recruitment plan is necessary when assessing the credibility of the data collected in the research (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). From the sample pool size of about 25 diverse learners in seventh to ninth grade, the sample size for the study was 12-15 participants. This sample size was suitable as it reached data saturation in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants' ages ranged from 12 to 16. As the researcher sought to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grades 7-9 who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year, purposive sampling was utilized (Appendix C). This sampling was used because it targeted selective participants and is one of the most successful providing the data was thoroughly analyzed (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019). The participants had specific criteria to be part of the interview. They must be from a diverse group: students from various backgrounds and experiences in the classroom with different learning needs (Hathaway & Fletcher, 2018). Also, I used convenience sampling because the participants were available and convenient for me (Akcamete & Dagli Gokbulut, 2018). Before undergoing this process, permission was sought from parents and minors in the study using parent consent (Appendix D) and student assent (Appendix E). These participants were free to dismiss themselves from the study at any time.

Data Collection Plan

In qualitative research, multiple data were collected using primary data sources. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, this triangulation strategy increased the credibility of the data and reduce potential biases (Yin, 2016). Also, the data was used to analyze the differences and similarities throughout the data collection process and report the findings. These data provided answers to future research questions (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019). The researcher spent ample time in the natural setting to gather data. The three data collection techniques that the

researcher used to collect data in this study are photographs, interviews, and observations. These data were purposefully used to gather data in a natural setting from the participants, who helped me understand their lived experiences through semi-formal questions and observations. The methods of data collection required me to prepare, collect, organize, and analyze the data.

Moustakas (1994) explains the data collection process as a lengthy process to gather information on the topic through informal and interactive questions. Hence, the aim was to create a conducive climate so the participants feel comfortable sharing openly on the topic. Researchers employed the epoche process before the interview to bracket biases in the study (Moustakas, 1994). The information collected was transcribed and organized for analysis.

Photographs

Before the interview, the participants had an idea of the expectations of taking the photographs. They shared their photographs during the interview. They were given sufficient time to take the pictures (Wang, 1999) but were instructed to take the pictures as soon as they got access to their phones or within a week of receiving the prompts (Appendix F).

Photographs provide more in-depth information during the interview (Glaw et al., 2017). The researcher was asked participants to take a picture of themselves using a meme that summarizes their experiences and feeling in diverse classrooms. When the participants talk about their photographs, they become the primary data source (Flick, 2018). Participants related to this medium of data collection because they used their phones and electronic devices often, so their interest in technology allowed them to be expressive and provided depth to the data. Participants enjoy taking pictures and expressing the message they want to share in the pictures (Graw et al., 2017). Students used their phones to take the pictures and brought the image with them on the day of the interview. They communicated the lived experience of one of their photographs (Wang, 2017). This information helps the researcher connect their

experiences with the pictures and descriptions that the participants provide non-verbally (Graw et al., 2017).

Photographs Procedures

1. Individually, participants were instructed to take their pictures before the interview.
2. They were asked to take clear pictures and use memes to tell a story of their academic experience in the classroom during reading and comprehension sessions.
3. Participants were instructed to use the pictures to create memes that best describe their classroom experience.
4. They were asked to create memes with their pictures as soon as they gain access to an electronic device and store it in a secure place or print it for the day of the interview.

On the day of the interview, participants were asked questions that were aligned with the research questions (Appendix G):

1. Describe how the photograph you selected influenced your performance in comprehension and fluency. **SQ1**
2. How do you think the meme you chose describes your social interaction in classroom activities? **SQ2**
3. How do you think the instructional methods that the teacher uses influenced your photograph choice? **SQ3**

Photographs and Voice Data Analysis Plan

The participants took their pictures before the interview and described their pictures on the day of the interview. The message the photographs create based on the participants' expressions is important (Flick, 2018). I listened to the tone of their voices and used them to compare their memes. The participants' voices were transcribed, and their memes were recorded. I looked at pictures and listened for similar experiences in the classrooms. I connected the interview responses and participants' expressions during the observation in the diverse classrooms and the pictures and presentations. The pictures the participants took

allowed them to share their lived experiences in the natural environment. Even though these students are not expressive in written words, their pictures and the power of their voice share a thousand words as they think of how they feel in their learning environment (Wang, 1999).

Individual Interviews

Qualitative interviews evoke an environment where the participants respond to questions and share their views openly (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In this semi-structured approach, the researcher would diverge from questions when necessary to get detailed answers to questions based on the responses. Parental content was requested (see Appendix H), and participants were interviewed on their experiences in diverse classrooms. This data collection strategy was important to this study as it dug deep into the participants' thoughts to explore the answers to questions that were needed for the research. The interviews took place in a private room in the school for about 30 minutes, away from distractions. The interview questions were in-depth questions that explored the phenomenon (Durdella, 2019). The responses were recorded and transcribed in this traditional face-to-face interview before the analysis. These questions were guided by ethical principles (Moustakas, 1994). These research questions were created from the literature on my topic to gather answers for the study. The following questions were answered using this data collection strategy from Patton (2015).

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we met one another for the first time. (Icebreaker)
2. I would like you to explain what you would do if you do not understand a reading comprehension lesson? SQ1
3. How do you get your teachers' support in reading and comprehension from your teachers in the classroom and the reading resource room? SQ1
4. During instructions, students do different things for many reasons. What do you usually do when the teacher is teaching a reading comprehension lesson? SQ1

5. I know we have subjects we like a lot and get excited when the teacher talks about them.
Tell me a little more about that subject. SQ1
6. Tell me about your experiences in the classroom when you have to work on assigned reading comprehension activities. SQ1
7. Now, it is your time to change things. There might be something that you wish to see differently in your classroom. What would you like to happen in the classroom that would help you enjoy your learning experience? SQ2
8. Suppose I am a new student in your class, and I ask you to tell me what to expect in your daily routine; what would your response be? SQ3
9. I remember being in the classroom when things happened, and I was like- what a day!
Explain that kind of experience when you thought it was a dreadful day for you. SQ4
10. Now that you have told me what your dreadful day is like tell me about the struggles you experience in your classroom during reading sessions? SQ4
11. How do you respond to these challenges? SQ4
12. I heard a lot about your classroom experiences, which will prepare you for the future. How do you think the experience in the reading resources classroom prepared you to be promoted to the next level academically? SQ4
13. We spoke a lot about your experience. I appreciate that you took the time to share a ton about yourself in the classroom. Before you leave, I have another question that I would like you to think deeply about and share your answer. What else do you think would be important for me to know about your diverse learning experience in the classroom? SQ5

Question one was an icebreaker to set the stage for the other questions. In questions two through six, the knowledge questions are factual information that the participants can respond to what they know (Patton, 2015). These first six questions are straightforward. The participant did not have to think deeply, and they got comfortable before answering more complex

questions. Patton (2015) affirmed that these questions would be easy to answer and are simple to recall. These questions set the stage for what is to come.

Question seven is an opinion and value question. Patton (2015) noted that once the participant's experience is described, this question is fitting. By now, the participants felt comfortable and were willing to share what they thought help increase their positive experiences in the classroom. It was time for them to share some solutions to the issue. This question asks the participants what they think about their experience and focuses on understanding their thought process in opinions or how they value things.

After question seven, which was about halfway through the interview, the researcher honored the participants. Patton (2015) encourages the interviewee to support and recognize the participants' responses. The researcher expressed appreciation to the participants for their willingness to share this important information.

Question eight is an example of a role-play. According to Patton (2015), these questions provide the participants with clues about the kind of responses the researcher expects. The participants had a clear direction of what the question was asking. When the question is communicated with authenticity, the quality of interaction and responses from the participants are improved.

Questions nine through 12 were presupposition questions. Now that a good rapport was developed, it was a fitting time to ask deeper questions. The quality of the responses to these questions would be in-depth and rich (Patton, 2015). The structure of these questions would compel the participants to share their views based on the wording of the questions. The researcher asks for exactly what is required from the participants in the most natural way. As these questions inquire about the struggles participants experience in the classroom, they would likely think deeply about the challenging experiences and regurgitate quality responses valuable to the study. They would likely provide direct examples and scenarios to explain their answers.

Question 13 was the final question. This closing question was significant in the interview. The researcher heard the information the participants want to share previously or after thinking but did not get the chance to do so. They were now free to reflect and add other valuable information to the study. Patton (2015) penned that this final question allows the interviewee to have the final say.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The source of evidence was the individual interview (Appendix H). Yin (2016) noted that an interview is a two-way interaction where the researcher seeks to understand the lived experience of the participants. In the individual interview, the data analysis was recorded and transcribed. Also, information or images that stood out to the researcher would be noted. The data collected through multifaceted methods are needed to analyze and create meaning through codes (Saldana, 2013). In analyzing the data, the information was re-read for thorough understanding. Then it was labeled, and codes were developed, using different color inks to create themes. Coding important information helped me highlight common themes in students' experiences. Then the findings would be analyzed and written. Saldana explained the processes for analyzing themes by identifying the codes, creating categories, reviewing high-level categories to generate themes, and applying the themes to the research under study.

Observations

During observations, I was detached from the activities to avoid drawing the attention of the participants. I understood that detaching myself from the activities helped the students to behave naturally and prevent biased results. Durdella (2019) considers observations the most effective means for gathering data in a natural setting. While observing participants in the natural setting, the researcher referred to the interview responses and connected what was observed in the classroom. The observations were scheduled for over four weeks, one per week. Observations were for one hour in each session. The students' and teachers' reactions to the instructions were observed and transcribed. I walked around the classroom as students

engage in the classroom activities. The research questions (Appendix I) guided the observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as I took note of the students' responses in relation to the students' social interactions and participation. Since the interview were before the observation, I was aware of the students being observed. I observed students' ability to complete ask, students' responses to answers, the teachers' method of presentation, and lesson plans. The observation was for a duration of one hour. Notes were carefully recorded during the observations (Appendix I).

Observation Data Collection Checklist

At the end of the school year, the observation checklist was used to gather data in the collection process (Appendix I). The researcher used the observation checklist to answer the research questions on the lived experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classrooms who failed the end of year exam in reading and comprehension.

1. The participants' names and grades were recorded. Also, the setting, date, and time of the interview were noted on the checklist.
2. The participants in the study were observed collectively within the time the researcher was in the setting- one hour, once per week, for four weeks.
3. The researcher observed participants' participation during whole class and small group reading and comprehension sessions.
4. The students' level of support from the teacher were noted in the checklist.
5. Key attention were given to students' interaction and preparedness for class.
6. The researcher checked to see students' ability to complete given class assignments and recorded scores/feedback.
7. At the end of the one-hour session, the researcher made descriptive and reflective notes on the activities/events that took place during the sessions.

Observations Data Analysis Plan

Field notes were compiled from the four weeks of observations. Data analysis should be thorough, so it is important to check and recheck the data using the different senses (Yin, 2016). I read through the notes taken during observation (Appendix I) and found common themes that could be added to the interview analysis plan. For example, I looked for similar behavior displayed in students when they were confused or did not understand the concept. I looked for repeated behaviors during group work or class participation. I focused on what students did when they are distracted or at what point they felt comfortable answering questions. I noted teachers' reward system and feedback when the answers were incorrect and correct. Also, I noted the support provided to students. Keywords and questions repeated during classroom discussions helped me to develop themes. Also, additional codes and themes were created as needed. Then the data was interpreted.

Data Synthesis

The researcher will follow Moustakas (1994) in analyzing data from the study. Moustakas noted that a systematic and structured approach should be implemented when analyzing data. Thus, interviewers should bracket their biases based on personal experiences, identify key statements, and gather these statements to find meanings and themes. The themes were analyzed into textual and structural descriptions to construct a composite description and discover the essence of the experience.

The steps for organizing and analyzing data are modified by Moustakas (1994) using Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen's (1975) method of organizing and analyzing phenomenological data. According to Moustakas, these steps are followed from the researchers' experiences and written records:

1. Consider each statement with respect to significance for a description of the experience.
2. Record all relevant statements.
3. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.

4. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
5. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim examples.
6. Reflect on my own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of the experience.
7. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the participants' experiences. (p.121).

The transcribing and checking process were done by listening to the audio-recording interview and converting spoken words to written words (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process allowed me to reflect on their own experiences and observations. Furthermore, memoing helped me reflect on my data and organize the notes.

During coding, I identified similarities and differences in students' lived experiences and issues in the diverse classrooms. Coding is organizing and searching for information in the text to find themes. According to Saldana (2013), coding helps researchers make interpretations and discoveries based on data collection. During the data collection process, text and pictures in different categories were bracketed and labeled (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used bracketing to assess the lived experiences of the participants without biases (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). I did not use Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) to organize my information. The data in the study were manually coded and analyzed since the data were not overbearing.

Trustworthiness

Researchers must ensure that the data sources are authentic (Yin, 2016). The author describes authenticity as the trustworthiness of the data. In the research process, three aspects of trustworthiness must be addressed. These criteria are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), these criteria define trustworthiness. Triangulation, member checks, and memoing were proposed methods to increase trustworthiness. These three methods were utilized to check the accuracy of my

findings. In the triangulate strategy, photographs, interviews, and observation were used to collect data. Member check ensures responses are clarified. A check ensures that the participants understand and respond to the correct questions by checking for interpretations. This process increased the reliability of the study because it was used to ensure the validity and accuracy of data. Also, the memoing method were used to record reflective notes. The memoing method is important because it helps the researcher to reflect on the raw data gathered and elaborate and organize information.

Credibility

Credibility is the validity of the findings based on the participants' interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher would ensure that the data is credible. Triangulation and member checks were used to ensure credibility. Credibility is important in research because it provides the confidence that the study is truthful using the standard approach for a qualitative study (Connelly, 2016). The intended perspectives of the participants were communicated. Hence, the reason strategies such as triangulation and member check were used to check the credibility and validate data from various sources. I checked for credibility by verifying information with the participants. In order to avoid misinterpretation of data, the responses were shared with the participants to ensure that they understood the questions asked and provided the correct responses. The triangulation method shares a complete understanding and accuracy of the data as different sources were used to gather information (Patton, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability refers to transferring qualitative research to another setting with other participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thick description is a strategy used in this aspect of trustworthiness. Transferability is important because other readers could use my rich, detailed data in my research procedure to apply in other contexts or settings (Connelly, 2016). The experiences in my study might be meaningful for others. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the use of thick descriptions adds validity and trustworthiness to your data collection.

Dependability

Dependability includes the consistency of the data over time. The findings are evaluated and interpreted from a series of reports (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The audit trail is the strategy used to check for the study's dependability (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). It is a transparent means of recording and tracing the credibility of data. I reported my findings by providing reflective notes and field notes for the transparency of the data collected (See Appendix I).

Confirmability

Confirmability is when the interpretation of data is not based on the researchers' perspectives but the findings from the data. Connelly (2016) noted that member checks could be conducted to check for confirmability and avoid biases in the data. Confirmability is important to report transparency of the findings throughout the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). These records would show the validity of the data. Member check was used to verify my findings and check for the validity of data. The rough draft was used for the participants to recheck the information recorded (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Audit trail, reflexivity, and triangulation were utilized in the data collection process. An audit trail is a technique that will be implemented to record detailed field notes to document the findings. Also, I used reflexivity to be mindful that my prior experiences can affect the outcome. The use of triangulation further decreased biases and increase accuracy in the process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical practices must be maintained throughout the research process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that the researchers are responsible for protecting the rights of participants. Thus, the researcher sought permission from the chief education officer to use the site for the study (Appendix B), and permission were requested from parents so their children can take part in the study (Appendix E). Participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher believes that participants

should be respected, and sensitive issues should be considered in the interview process.

Approval from the IRB were given before gathering information. Furthermore, the participants were protected because the study's objectives were shared, and anonymous names for the participants and the setting were used.

Also, the researcher was familiar with the participants, so the personal experiences were bracketed out as much as possible. Furthermore, the area selected for the interview did not affect the accuracy of the study. The data from the study were stored in a locked filing cabinet and backup data electronically on the researcher's computer that is password protected. The data are confidential, and the name of the participants do not appear on the documents. The participants and the institution were pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The researcher must ensure that the data collected is not compromised and does not place the participants at risk (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These approaches prevent ethical issues and biased interpretations (Durdella, 2019). The participants' names did not reappear in the data analysis process. In the data collection and analysis procedure, I was cautious about subjecting my personal feelings and biases to the study. Any ethical considerations or implications of the research were discussed.

Summary

This chapter shared a detailed description of the research design implemented and the methodology used for the study. The research design was a qualitative design with a transcendental approach to examine the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. Also, this chapter highlighted the participants in the study and the setting in which the study took place. The data collection method, the data analysis procedures, and the researcher's role were explained. The data collection method used in the study were interviews, observations, and drawings. The data analysis strategies used to increase trustworthiness were

triangulate, member check, and memoing. In the end, the researcher addressed trustworthiness issues and ethical considerations to be considered in the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district. A phenomenological approach is necessary to capture the real-life encounter (Farrell, 2020). It aimed to gather the lived experiences of the participants and understand the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This chapter will highlight the results from the phenomenological study, which illustrated shared photographs using memes, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and observations. The order of the data collection was intentional, as the participants started by discussing the photographs using memes and freely expressing themselves. This method intends for the participants to feel more comfortable during the interview that follows. Also, I knew of them before the classroom observations. The themes will be developed after manually coding and analyzing the data collected from the study. Moustakas (1994) will be used to organize and analyze phenomenological data from the study as a systematic and structured approach should be implemented when analyzing data.

Participants

A sample of 12 middle school students from the same school was selected for the study. On receiving approval to complete my study, the school's principal referred me to the head of the English department, who provided the data on students who met the criteria. I further selected the students and their information to prepare for parental consent. I contacted the parents face-to-face and requested permission for the students to participate in the study. The process was seamless since it was a small community where parents were easily accessible. The parents did not hesitate to grant their approval. I had a setback with a parent who was ill and advised that she would sign the next day.

All of them agreed and signed the consent. Before parents signed, they ensured their children were pleased to complete their study. The interview sessions took place in an enclosed room, and none of the participants withdrew from the study. Pseudonyms were used for the participants. The participants' demographics are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

Students Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade Level
Molly	14	Female	9
Joan	15	Female	9
Peter	15	Male	9
Bobby	14	Male	9
Brad	14	Male	8
Tom	15	Male	8
Phillip	15	Male	8
Ted	13	Male	8
Ricky	15	Male	8
Akeem	14	Male	8
Lyndon	12	Male	7
Mike	11	Male	7

A description of each participant in the study is discussed.

Molly

Molly's favorite subjects are the technical classes- cooking and technical drawing. She is a 14-year-old student in grade 9. She likes to do make-up, and she aspires to be a doctor. "I like to do make-up for fun and want to be a doctor when I grow up." Nevertheless, she

expresses her disgust with reading and comprehension because it is plenty of work. “The reading and comprehension class is just a lot of work.”

Joan

Joan is in grade 9 and does not know what she wants to be when she grows up. Her favorite subject is art because she likes to draw. “School is very difficult for me, and when I don’t understand something, I try to ask a friend that knows or just do what I think it is.” She lamented. She does not think that classes are fun. Joan also stated, “the classes need to have more games and make learning fun.”

Peter

Peter’s favorite subject is social studies because he likes the teacher. He is 15 years old and is in grade 9. “Reading and comprehension class is just dry and not much fun.” He stated with disappointment. He does not show much interest in the subject. “Either I just sit and listen to the teacher talk, then put my head down when she gets boring.” “Every day is the same thing.”

Bobby

Bobby is in grade 9. He does not have a favorite subject and likes to play basketball. With his head leaning to the floor, he said, “this reading can be hard to understand, and I do not like it.” He explained, “I can read, but I do not like to write the answers... school is hard, and I do not understand.” He is not sure what he wants to be, but he has fun at school because he gets to meet all his friends. He said, “me friends here at school, so I like to come to school, and that makes me feel good.”

Brad

Brad is in grade 8 and likes music. He also likes drawing and games. However, he does not like reading much. He said, “sometimes, I have a hard time understanding and finishing me work.” Brad continues, “I’ll try to do it on my own and not ask for help. I just don’t want to be a bother to people.”

Tom

Tom likes Math and wants to be a truck driver when he grows up. He is in grade 8 and likes to do his work when he is having a good day. “On a good day, I complete all my assignments, I do all my work, and other times when people stress me, I do not complete it.”

Phillip

Phillip is in grade 8. His favorite subject is Math. “I get excited about Math,” Phillip mentioned with great pride. I don’t like to write, and reading assignments is very hard for me sometimes. “I will like to see less writing in class, too much for me,” Phillip said.

Ted

Ted is a grade 8 student who likes technical drawing. When he grows older, he wants to do something where he can use his hands. Ted does not like classes because he does not like to read. He said, “sometimes it is hard to write what I want to say, and that is really hard for me.”

Ricky

Ricky is in grade 8, and his favorite subject is Math. He does not know what he wants to be, but not something is reading. He said, “I like reading and thing, but I don’t want to do something there because it’s sometimes hard.” Ricky said reading and English are boring because the teachers talk too much.

Akeem

Akeem is in grade 8. He considers himself a fun-loving person who likes to have a good time. He said, “life is cool, and I love to have fun” His favorite subject is music, and he wants to be a mechanic when he grows up. Akeem thinks reading is good but not much fun. He said, “you see, I think sometimes reading can be more interesting, like using things like games helps to talk about the topic we are doing.”

Lyndon

Lyndon is a 12-year-old grade 7 student. He loves track and field and wants to be a basketball player or an athlete. His favorite subjects are music and PE. “When I get reading,

comprehension is sometimes hard for me.” Lyndon lamented. He said he does get help from the teacher because he does ask. He added, “my teachers do not help me because they do not tell them I don’t understand... I don’t tell them.”

Mike

Mike is an 11-year-old grade 7 student, and his favorite class is math. Mike likes to play basketball. He is unsure of his career path. “I don’t know what I want to be when I get older.” For Mike, school is hard work. “They do a lot of work that I do not know what to do,” he stated.

Results

The researcher used photographs, interviews, and observations to gather data for this phenomenological study. These methods of data collection allowed me to collect comprehensive information that helped with my data analysis. The interviews and the photographs were presented on the same day while the observation presided over. The observation sessions were one hour daily for four days. The students were observed during the instructional periods, and each student was interviewed for approximately 15-20 minutes. The interviews were recorded, and notes were taken during observations. The participants freely expressed themselves during the interview and were not made the center of attention during observation. Each participant’s interview was transcribed after each interview. All data collected were stored and locked to ensure the participants’ privacy was protected.

The information gathered from this phenomenological study was bracketed (Moustakas, 1994). I bracketed my feelings throughout the data collection process to avoid biases as a special education teacher and my personal knowledge. The data responses and observations were manually coded using different color highlighters. I used inductive coding and a hierarchal coding frame to organize the codes. Common themes were developed in the process. The common themes under the data collection methods were compared.

The themes emerged from the study are: (a). Instructional Engagement (b). Classroom Management (c). Social Engagement.

Table 2

Research Questions Alignment with Data Points

SRQ	Photographs	Interviews	Observations
<p>SRQ 1: What are the academic experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?</p>	<p>Describe how the photograph you selected influenced your performance in reading and comprehension.</p>	<p>I would like you to explain what you would do if you do not understand a reading comprehension lesson.</p> <p>How do you get support in reading and comprehension from your teachers in the classroom and in reading resource room?</p> <p>Now, it is your time to change things. There might be something that you wish to see differently in your classroom. What would you like to happen in the classroom that you think would help you enjoy your learning experience.</p> <p>Now that you have told me about what your dreadful day is like, tell me about the struggles that you experience in your classroom during</p>	<p>Participation during whole class and group reading comprehension sessions</p> <p>Teacher provides support</p>

		reading sessions.	
<p>SRQ 2: What are the social experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?</p>	<p>How do you think the meme you chose describes your social interaction in classroom activities?</p>	<p>Please introduce yourself to me as if we met one another for the first time.</p> <p>I know that we have subjects that we like a lot and get excited when the teacher talks about them. Tell me a little more about that subject.</p> <p>During instructions students would do different things for many reasons. What do you do usually do when the teacher is teaching a reading comprehension lesson?</p> <p>Suppose I am a new student in your class, and I ask you to tell me about what I expect in your daily routine, what would your response be?</p> <p>I remember being in the classroom when things happen, and I was like- what a day! Explain that kind of experience when you thought it was a dreadful day for you.</p>	<p>Attentiveness and social interaction during class instructions</p> <p>Preparedness and organization for class</p>
<p>SRQ 3: What impact do students' lived</p>	<p>How do you think the instructional methods that the teacher uses</p>	<p>Tell me about your experiences in the classroom when</p>	<p>Ability to complete reading comprehension</p>

<p>experiences have on their performance in reading comprehension?</p>	<p>influenced your photograph choice?</p>	<p>you have to work on assigned reading comprehension activities.</p> <p>How do you respond to these challenges?</p> <p>I heard a lot about your classroom experiences, which will prepare you for the future. How do you think the experience in the reading resources classroom prepared you to be promoted to the next level academically?</p> <p>We spoke a lot about your experience. You took the time to share a ton about yourself in the classroom, and I appreciate it. Before you leave, I have another question that I would like you to think deeply about and share your answer. What else do you think would be important for me to know about your diverse learning experience in the classroom?</p>	<p>assignments</p>
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Research Question One

The first question, “what are the academic experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?” was geared to gather information on instructional practices during the teaching and learning process. In the final analysis of the data, three themes emerged, as seen in table 3 below.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes from Triangulation Data

Themes	Sub-themes
Instructional Engagement	Modelling hands-on activities Interactive technology Collaborative group work
Classroom Management	Students’ behavior Teachers’ verbal discipline Students’ performance
Social Engagement	Valued friendship Self confidence

Table 4*Open Codes and Themes Derived from Research Question One*

Open Codes	Frequency of open-codes appearance across all data point	Theme	Subthemes
Lack of collaborative and active learning environment	42	Instructional Engagement	Modelling hands-on activities Interactive technology Collaborative group work
Deficiency in digital and hands-on resources	93		
Unstructured instructional routines	26		
Failure to differentiate instructions	17		
Disconnection of instruction to background and interest.	12		

Instructional Engagement

The first theme derived from the data analysis was instructional engagement, as shown in the table 4 above. The two sub-themes that emerged from instructional engagement were modeling hands-on activities and interactive technology. After the photographs' discussion, interviews, and observation, it revealed that students thought that instructional engagement in the classroom impacts their daily experience. Ten out of 12 participants thought that teachers' methods of instruction help determine the understanding they taught. Brad commented, "These teachers need to do more to help us because sometimes we do not understand." Tom, stated, "Every time it's the same thing, all they do is talk... hmm, only if it could be fun." Ted and Ricky shared similar sentiments. Ted noted, "I mean they talk a lot to explain and write a lot of notes, I wish I could do cool stuff." Ricky added, "We have to write too many notes, I wish that could change". During observations, the teacher led the instructions (class observation, October 7, 2022). Peter's head was down on the table while the teacher instructed the lesson.

He seemed disengaged and failed to lift his head even though he was warned to do so. In the photograph memes and discussion, Bobby exclaimed, “I am just bored and nothing fun really happens most time.” Also, Molly said, “I do not feel the interest, I am just here...school is stupid.”

Modeling Hands-on Activities

Modeling hands-on activities is the first sub-theme derived from instructional engagement. The participants are eager to see teachers demonstrate what they want them to do. They voiced that that would give them the confidence to know what they are doing is what they expect. Joan shared, “I need to know what to do sometimes; if they could just show me or give me enough examples until I feel safe. Then do something like what the topic is about... I will know what I am doing and not be confused.”

Mike's photograph memes displayed a confused face about school. He mentioned, “Sometimes I know, and other times, I just don't know... I try.” Phillip noted, “If they show us, I will like that, not just tell us to do it and we do know what to do.”

Interactive Technology

The second sub-theme derived from instructional engagement was interactive technology. Interactive technology helps students to use computer programs and applications to communicate and helps to learn to be engaging and lively. Participants spoke highly about the use of interactive technology in the classroom. “You know what will be good, using the smartboard to help us learn. Teachers don't use the things really. We will more maybe if we do things in class” (Mike, personal interview, September 30, 2022). When explaining the regular day in the class, Bobby noted, “We know to use the computer, and we will learn if we use them in class. We hardly use anything else, but the teachers talk, we write notes, and do some work.” Akeem expressed similarly, “I find using technology will be more fun, like if they can put something on it after they teach or talk about, instead of doing the same thing every day.”

Collaborative Group Work

The third sub-theme derived from the instructional engagement was collaborative group work. The students were interested in working in groups while doing class assignments and projects. They thought that would help them understand and be more involved. “We work in groups sometimes, but not a lot. Some of the time we do work alone. I like to do work together with the other students when they group us up and thing...” (Peter, personal interview, September 28, 2022). We might understand more when we are in groups instead of doing it alone. We can help each other. Ted believes that working with other students will help students with their understanding. “Sometimes when I do not understand, I will ask someone to help me” (Ted, personal interview, October 3, 2022).

Table 5

Open Codes and Themes Derived from Research Question Three

Open Codes	Frequency of open-codes appearance across all data point	Theme	Sub-Themes
Relationship among students and teachers	48	Classroom Behavior Outcomes	Students' behavior Teachers' verbal discipline Students' performance
Maintain standards	18		
Classroom routines	30		
Consequences for action	22		

Classroom Behavior Outcomes

Classroom behavior outcome was the second theme that emerged from the data analysis, as shown in table 5 above. Three sub-themes were developed from this main theme. These sub-themes were students' behaviors, teachers' verbal discipline, and students' performance.

Students' Behaviors

The first sub-theme is students' behaviors. Students talk about students' behavior that disturbs class instruction. "We have fights in the classroom when the teacher is there, like when a boy wanted to hit me when I didn't do nothing," Lyndon shouted. "I talk a lot in class, but I'm trying to do better" (Ricky, personal interview, September 30, 2022). Peter added, "Some students listen, and others do not do what they are supposed to when class going." Mike chuckled and said he would come clean about his behavior, "I will be honest, I does talk...when I get angry, I don't complete my work and give the teacher at the end. I can't work when I ain't good." From observations, students were not seen fighting or behaving totally unruly. However, students were easily distracted and talkative during instruction. Also, some of the students responded ill-mannered and seemed careless about learning.

Teachers' Verbal Discipline

The second sub-theme is teachers' verbal discipline. Akeem shared reasons for teachers' discipline in the classroom. He explained, "If a teacher talks to me in a way, and I don't like, I'll flip. It gets me upset." He continued, "They does talk to me at the wrong time, when I am having a bad day" (Akeem, personal interview, September 28, 2022). Phillip shared a similar story, "They like to shout at people; I don't want people talk to me so." Also, Molly firmly noted, "Sometimes teachers do not know how to talk to you." "Some of them cool, I like that... others just shout at you" (Joan, personal interview, September 28, 2022). From observation, teachers' methods of discipline varied. It was noticed that some students were not pleased with the stern disciplining methods while others took advantage of cheerful teachers. Some teachers had a balance in discipline, which resulted in a more settled classroom environment and fewer verbal disciplining issues.

Students' Performance

The second sub-theme is students' performance. During classroom observations, Mike submitted an incomplete assignment (class observation, October 7, 2022). He answered the multiple-choice options but refused to answer the short answers. The latter weighed more

points. As a result, he performed poorly. Brad stated, “I fail a lot because we have to read these long, boring stories, and I ain't able.” “I do my work and try my best... when I think I pass, I still get a low grade” (Ted, personal interview, October 3, 2022). Similarly, Lyndon's meme photograph expressed, “I do not like to do work and test when I have to write because I do not do good, so I feel frustrated with school.”

Table 6

Open Codes and Themes Derived from Research Question Two

Open Codes	Frequency of open-codes appearance across all data point	Theme	Sub-themes
Community-building relationship	10	Social Engagement	Valued Friendship Self-Acceptance
Peer pressure influences	84		
Confidence in students	59		

Social Engagement

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was social engagement, as shown in the table above. Two sub-themes that were developed were valued friendship and self-confidence. The participants paid keen interest in the social life in the classroom. The students thought socializing and having more time to talk freely to their friends about topics of interest would be necessary during class. Thus, the time for social engagement was an important aspect for them. “I like to come to school to meet my friends. Seeing my friends make me happy” (Bobby, personal interview, September 26, 2022).

Valued Friendship

The students appreciate the friendships they have at school and get excited to spend quality time with the companies where they find happiness. Brad expressed, “Home is bored, and even if I do not like to come to school, I still like it because I get to see my friends.” I am always happy to come to see my friends to chill... I mean, school is good and thing, but when I

get to talk, it more fun for me,” Mike said, with a loud grin. Joan uttered that at school, she feels free and loves to spend time in a place where she gets to express herself to others like her. “I get to meet my friends to talk and have fun here. “All my friends are at school...home so bored for me.”

Self-Acceptance

The students from the study longed to find self-acceptance. They were careful of what their peers thought about them. They compare themselves with others, and as a result, they fail to improve their weaknesses on a topic taught in reading comprehension. “When I do not understand something, I do not ask for help because I do not want to bother people” (Ricky, personal interview, September 30, 2022). “Sometimes, the teacher does not know when I do not understand because I do not ask. If I do not say, they would not know” (Akeem, personal interview, September 28, 2022). One participant shared a nervous face on their photograph meme. “School makes me nervous because I am worried sometimes if I do not know what to do. I prefer to just figure it out on my own. I am scared to ask for help... they might get angry” (Peter, photograph discussion, September 28, 2022).

Outliers Data and Findings

This section will discuss unexpected findings from the study. The outlier in the study is the classroom temperature. One participant expressed the issues of constant distraction from being in a hot classroom. He voiced that the humid temperature gets him sweaty and uncomfortable. He lamented,

We do have fans in the classroom, and I get really hot...when I get hot, my eczema gets bad and itches; I do not like to be hot. We need AC so we can feel cool and comfortable. I hate to sweat in class. I do not want people to tell me how I smell, so sometimes I will take out my shirt from my pants and get breeze” (Bobby, personal interview, September 26, 2022). Another student briefly stated, “I will walk out of the class and stand in front of the door when I am hot. I miss some of the things that the

teachers say because I don't pay attention then (Lyndon, personal interview, October 3, 2022).

Research Question Responses

This transcendental phenomenological study was guided by one central research question and three sub-questions. The central research question aims to explore the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. The themes that were developed after the data analysis were: (a) instructional engagement, (b) social engagement, and (c) classroom behavior outcomes. The development of these themes was supported by participants' responses to the research questions and observations in the data collection process.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year? The participants provided detailed descriptions of their experiences in the middle school classrooms. Some of the participants shared more than others and felt free to express their lived experiences which helped to develop three themes: (a) instructional engagement, (b) social engagement, and (c) classroom behavior outcomes.

Most of the students had similar experiences and were dissatisfied with their experiences, as their lived experiences affected their performance in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. Molly noted, "I think we have to write too much. As soon as they come to the class, we have to write a lot." She continued, "They can do a little game or something about the class or work on the computer to make it fun." Peter had a similar concern, "Classes are bored, and I don't have much to say. The teachers talk a lot. They do not expect us to like school because every time is the same thing... only talk and write." Sometimes when I get bored, I talk. I don't say much to my teachers. If I do not understand,

that is it. I try or ask someone who I think can help because I don't want they tell me anything to make me angry," shouted Tom.

Not only were the students vocal about the style of instruction in the class, but they also shared the behaviors displayed by classmates and teachers. Akeem stated, "the teachers talk to people how they want, and I can't deal with that. I'll just tell them as it is when they disrespect me...sometimes, I 'does' just be cooling." Bobby did not have a problem with his teachers' discipline measures. He admits that when he finishes his work, he talks to others. He said, "I like to talk a lot in class because I get bored easily...I would talk to my friends when I finish." Rick made it clear that the environment is not conducive for learning, "This environment can disturb others. I like to come to school to meet my friends, and I come for that more than work because home bored... I mean, I come to learn, but school is more fun when I can meet my friends and chill."

Sub-Question One

What are the academic experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom? The results from the study revealed that participants faced various, but similar academic experiences in the middle school classroom. Some students struggled to grasp concepts, as the instructional approach that teachers used to teach were of concern. Most of the students give the silent treatment and learn the materials taught. Lyndon mentioned, "My teachers do not help me because I do not tell them I don't understand, I don't tell them." Another student uttered, "If I tell them I don't know how to do the work, they might shout and say I was not paying attention" (Ted, personal interview, October 3, 2022). Being careless about grasping the materials is affecting students' academic performance. As Brad said, "I don't bother if I ain't know; I will figure it out and do something."

Furthermore, students struggle to read and comprehend materials at the level they are instructed. As observed, when they were given written assignments, they did not place much emphasis on the task, or they submitted incomplete work. They lacked interest in their work

and were unwilling to participate in discussions. It was evident that some students were frustrated when they did not understand but did not ask for clarification. Also, as noted by the students during the interview, the classroom instructions involved few interactive activities. The teachers asked a considerable number of questions to get students' responses orally, but they were reluctant to answer in most cases. "Reading and comprehension is already hard for me because I do not like to read" (Bobby, personal interview, September 26, 2022). Also, students cried about the quantity of work that involve an immense amount of writing. "It is just a lot of work...it is bored just to read and answer questions (Peter, personal interview, September 28, 2022. "You have to write it, and that's a lot of time," Phillip said. One student applauds teachers who go the extra mile to instruct and make learning meaningful. Joan said, "I like when the teachers do things a little different and spice it up with a game...we don't forget." One student, who was not very talkative, displayed a happy face about their experience at school. He explained, "I think I feel good about school... the teachers try, and I get to learn every day (Mike, photograph discussion, September 30, 2022).

Sub-Question Two

What are the social experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom? The participants from the study show interest in socializing with their peers at school and engaging in activities where their friends are involved. They are also concerned about how their peers feel about them when they need clarification on a topic. Tom said, "I feel bad about stopping the teacher to say I don't understand... hmmm, I don't want to keep back the class or for others to think I keeping them back and look at me funny." Joan shared similar sentiments, "Some children look at you when you say you don't get it, so I stop. I just let the teacher keep going when I don't understand." Brad explained, "I like school to meet everyone. In school, you just have to be tough or else people will play around with you. You have to know how to act. You see, I like to have fun in school, so I get along with everyone."

Sub-Question Three

What impact do students' lived experiences have on their performance in reading comprehension? Based on the results from the study, it was revealed that the students' lived experiences affect their performance in reading comprehension. These students generate poor behavior and underperform in their English- reading comprehension. Ricky shared, "When I don't understand I leave it out and give it up." "School is confusing to me because reading and writing is hard for me" (Ted, personal interview, October 30, 2022). Molly whispered, "I got a low grade in English because I failed the reading and comprehension section...I do not like to read these long, boring paragraphs. Then, I have to write a lot." Peter explained why he failed. He said, "I don't remember sometimes, I do what I know and will get some point, but the reading part, that hard...I will get low marks because I don't know how to start the answer. Ehhh, sometimes, I try and still get them wrong."

Summary

This chapter revealed findings from the transcendental phenomenological study on the lived experience of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. The experiences of 12 participants were gathered through the use of photographs, interviews, and observations. Quotes from the semi-formal interviews, observation details, and memes from the photographs were deeply analyzed to support the themes. Three themes emerged from the findings that addressed the central research question and the three sub-questions. The main themes were instructional engagement, social engagement, and classroom behavior outcomes. Although diverse learners struggle academically and perform below their grade level in reading and comprehension, they are social beings who find fulfillment in interacting with their peers. Hence, they find that collaboration, interactive technology, and hands-on learning in the classroom can be improved through social interaction. Based on the results, increased instructional and social engagement would enhance students' classroom behaviors and performance.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district. Chapter Five will discuss the findings based on the themes that were developed in the study. The interpretations of the findings will be supported by empirical and theoretical sources. The implications for practices, limitations, and recommendations for future research will be discussed. The chapter will be concluded with a summary of the entire study.

Discussion

This transcendental phenomenological research study explored the lived experience of diverse learners in middle school who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. This section will discuss the findings that were developed at the end of the study. It will highlight the findings of the themes: (a) instructional engagement, (b) classroom behavior outcomes, and (c) social engagement. Also, this section highlights the interpretation of the findings and the implication for policy and practice. The theoretical and empirical implications, as well as limitations and delimitations of this study, would be discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research on the topic will be examined.

Interpretation of Findings

This section of the study summarizes the thematic findings and interpretation of the themes. I discovered three themes and eight sub-themes. The three main themes connected with the sub-themes expand the overall essence of the findings. The three main themes that emerged from the study are (a) instructional engagement, (b) classroom behavior outcomes, and (c) social engagement. They were developed through purposeful sampling using triangulation methods. The 12 participants in the study failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. They struggle to understand reading skills, and the instructional

approach was of concern to the participants. Their academic and social experiences were not satisfied. These factors affected the performance in reading and comprehension. The students who had positive social experiences were those who interact with their friends freely outside of the class setting. Meaningful social interaction and collaboration are limited in the classrooms. Social interaction among diverse learners creates an active learning environment that promotes a deeper understanding of language. Furthermore, the use of language through these discussions, questioning, and open feedback encourage diverse learners to improve their reading and comprehension skills. Classroom misbehaviors would be minimized in this structured and fun learning environment.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The central research questions used to guide this transcendental phenomenological study were: What are the lived experiences of diverse learners in middle school classrooms who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year? This question was followed by three sub-questions to gather more specific details that can be used to answer the general question. These questions are:

SQ1: What are the academic experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?

SQ2: What are the social experiences of diverse learners in the middle school classroom?

SQ3: What impact do students' lived experiences have on their performance in reading comprehension?

These questions were used as the focus to gather information from twelve participants through photographs, interviews, and observations. After analyzing the data, the themes that emerged are (a) instructional engagement, (b) social engagement, and (c) classroom behavior outcomes. The 8 sub-themes are modeling hands-on activities, interactive technology, collaborative group work, students' behavior, teachers' verbal discipline, students'

performance, valued friendship, and self-confidence. Most of the students voiced their pleasure to attend school. However, it was not to learn new materials but to interact with their friends. The few students who mainly attend to strengthen their skills are concerned about the distractions in school as well as the attitude towards others who will see them as incompetent or bothersome if they do not understand a concept. The students report that instructional approaches can be improved because the methods are usually standards with little collaborative work among peers and interactive activities. The participants' boredom and disengagement can result in teachers resolving to verbal discipline. The teachers' discipline approach results in further misbehaviors from students and management issues in the classrooms.

Conducive Learning Climate. The participants in the study desire for the classroom to be more interactive and fun, with learning resources that will keep students engaged. Students long to see more collaborative group work activities where they can learn from each other. Teachers who lack training in technology and methods to enhance learning can learn from their colleagues and collaborate with different learning communities to practice and gather evidence-based strategies in reading and comprehension. Also, a suitable learning environment can entail attractive posters and centers that discuss the topic at hand. This would allow the students to make references and feel more confident in the task.

The sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1934) and the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1986) encourage a conducive learning environment to aid students' success. Through social interaction with others, students work together to share meaningful ideas and creative discussions among themselves to help them think critically. The below achievers and advanced learners can learn from each other, provide guidance, connect ideas and embrace differences. Furthermore, students can learn through modeling and observation. As students observe, they would gain new experiences that they can use to create an active learning environment and model positive behaviors that are applauded.

Relationship Building. Teacher-student relationships in the classroom help students and teachers to learn from each other, understand and accept their differences, and grow as unique beings. Joan noted, “If the teachers understand us, they will know how to deal with us better.” Furthermore, Bobby argued, “Sometimes they get angry for no reason and simple things. Sometimes when I am in a good mood, and they behave funny, I just don’t talk and leave them because if I say something, I’ll get in trouble.” As observed in the classrooms, a similar pattern was noted. Some students talk or sleep on the desk for the duration of the class. Although the teachers attempted in some instances to get their attention, they did not comply. It was obvious that some of the teachers tried to help these specific students as they were intentionally moved to the front of the class to avoid distractions. However, students noted that teachers need to be hard on them. “Teachers need to show that they respect us so we can do the same; they get upset for little things,” Phillip stated. If teachers and students take time to know each other at the initial stage, their relationship can be stronger. Both parties must seek to communicate effectively by taking time to listen and understand.

Structured Policies and Rules. Structured policies and rules in the classrooms were of concern for students. Akeem and Lyndon believed that school provides an avenue for learning even though extra resources are not utilized. However, they are worried that regulations are lacking. Akeem said, “No one pays much attention to the rules, and they ‘ignore’ what happens when the teachers are talking. Lyndon agreed that students do what they want. “They don’t care, especially with some teachers.” Structured instructional activities remain one of the themes that diverse learners lamented strongly. These activities evoke and engage learning among students and teachers. Even structured breaks in middle school must be planned with suitable opportunities for students to socialize and develop competencies (Hodge et al., 2022; London, 2022,). Structured and organized instruction gives way to fewer distractions and misbehaviors that would hinder learning. Hence, policies and rules must be implemented and maintained in and around the school. Students spoke about the need for the school rules to be

fair and followed to see a change in the institution. They craved teachers and administrators to enforce the rules by being examples and supporting them. Also, some students mentioned that it can be difficult to abide by the rules since certain situations force them to have outbursts. They continued that these challenges can be avoided if they are reminded of the rules in a caring and sensitive manner. "Teachers need to show respect and act as if they care, some of them do, and others don't bother," Ted shared in his interview. "They do not want us to talk, so we do not group work," Mike noted.

Implication for Policy and Practice

This section of the study focuses on the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of policy or practice. Based on the research findings from this phenomenological study, recommendations for stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, administrators, education officers, and the district, are necessary to improve the experience and success of diverse learners in middle school who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year.

Implication for Policy

The government should implement policies that cater to the needs of diverse students at the middle school who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. Diverse learners at the middle school who fail reading comprehension at the end of the term should sign an agreement stating that they will seek to improve their performance at the end of the school year. In turn, administrators, teachers, and parents should also sign indicating that they will provide all the tools and support necessary for students to be successful. Furthermore, these students and stakeholders should be counseled and monitored to ensure they adhere to the policies. Persons who refuse to provide documentation and evidence that they uphold the agreement could be penalized.

Implication for Practice

A practical implication is to provide training among teachers should be readily available on meeting the holistic needs of students. The students long for the teachers to

understand who they are. If the teachers' pay invested interest in studying the backgrounds and needs of students, they would understand their strengths and shortcomings. Thus, teachers will meet students at their point of need. The study shows that students' social and academic needs in the classroom are not met. Hence, teachers should be trained to intertwine reading comprehension lessons with students' interests and needs by creating a conducive learning environment.

Since reading and comprehension are considered the core of the curriculum, efforts must be made for the evidence practices to be evident in the classrooms. Another implication is to monitor diverse learners' progress and behavior regularly. Students' performance could be managed biweekly, and their engagement in classroom activities should be observed and recorded. Alerts could be emailed to parents when students are at the borderlines, and the necessary help should be provided immediately. Effective classroom instructions, healthy social engagement practices, and practical classroom management strategies must be revised. Teachers should work collaboratively with colleagues held accountable to a high professional attitude and instructional delivery standard.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section of the phenomenological study addresses the theoretical and empirical implications. The diverse participants who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year described their lived experiences in middle school. The subheading provides more details about both implications.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework used to guide this phenomenological study is the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). The study found that students' social interaction increases language development among students. These diverse learners who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year experience inadequate social interaction and collaboration among their peers, where they can learn from

each other by engaging in discussions and improving problem-solving skills. Students are social beings and enjoy learning through play and interaction among peers. If teachers are aware or educated on the importance of strategies that support their theories, such as role-play, group work, peer teaching, and opening class discussions, they would embrace them and utilize them in their classroom instruction. The diverse learners would gain a sense of confidence when they are involved in these meaningful activities while sharing their inputs.

Students experienced a lack of relationship building and a breakdown in communication among their teachers. The sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) support extended learning in the classroom to build rapport. Students and teachers learn more about their cultural backgrounds and interests through constructive discussions. They would realize they can use their different ideas to assist with their learning needs of each other. To avoid the breakdown in interaction and learning, teachers must intentionally seek to have meaningful interactions with students. Thus, embracing these theories will reduce classroom management issues that hinder success. This study supports the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) as they are connected to improve diverse learners' social interactions and language development among learners. The research questions related to the social cognitive and sociocultural theory and provided insight into the lived experiences of participants. Thus, these theories are relevant for this study.

Empirical Implications

The majority of the review literature gathered in the study confirmed some of the experiences faced by diverse learners in middle school classrooms. Some of this literature highlighted students' experiences faced in the middle school classroom, such as challenges, differentiated instructions, student engagement, and collaboration. However, no research explored the lived experience of these students who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the year. In the study, the voices of the students were heard. It was interesting to note

that the students were observing and eager to share their experiences with the hope that they would see some positive impact on their education.

The participants' interviews and memes gave them the privilege to express themselves. The participants struggle with reading and understanding comprehension at their grade level. As a result, they dislike participating in sessions that they think would showcase their weaknesses. Also, when their needs are not satisfied in the classroom, they become frustrated and refuse to admit they do not understand. They did not want to be seen as incompetent, so they suffered in silence. In diverse settings, teachers' attitude influence students' learning (Banse & Palacios, 2018), so teachers should make it their duty to build a suitable learning environment that encourages open interaction. Moreover, these struggles can be prevented if teachers take the time to learn their students' strengths and weaknesses. This would help teachers create a plan for working with diverse students by creating groups, activities, and interactive lessons. Diverse learners are better understood when healthy relationships are developed among students and teachers (Rivera & Titu, 2021; Quin, 2017). Their needs and interest are met, when they are meaningfully engaged in learning (Alley, 2019). These teachers could help students feel more confident as they intentionally monitor students' learning, evaluate for students' understanding, and motivate them in the process.

The students in the study shared some of their interests and future aspirations. These students may be weak in reading and comprehension, but they have areas of strength. Many students showed a strong interest in math and technical subjects that required them to be hands-on. They also endeavor to be leaders in their futures field, such as truck drivers, mechanics, doctors, chefs, and entrepreneurs. The teachers can tap into their interests and create reading materials and assignments that will likely build their needs. None of the students mentioned reading and comprehension (English) as their favorite subjects, as they thought it involved too much writing and little interaction. These practices should be avoided in order to encourage learning and active participation. The teachers could create activities in reading and

comprehension where students could improve on weak areas, build on their strengths, and enjoy learning in the process.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study has its limitation and delimitation that must be considered. The limitations affected the study, as they were not in my control. There were a few limitations in the ratio of male to female, ethnicity, and age range of the participants in the study. The participants in the study did not express the experiences of all other students in the district. The results did not include other schools with students who might have met the criteria.

The delimitation did not have a negative effect on the study as they were purposive decisions in the research. A transcendental phenomenological study was selected. As I explored the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district, the participants had to be in the public school under study and must be in grades 7-9. Additionally, they must have failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. Since the participants were under 18, consent and assent were required. The study merely focused on students who failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year and no other subjects. The rationale behind the decision was necessary to focus on the real-life experiences of the participants who failed reading and comprehension at this level and use the results to improve their performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies are recommended from the study to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district. Future research should be undertaken on all four public schools in the Virgin Islands school district to get a more comprehensive and accurate view of students' lived experiences. This will gather more participants from more diverse settings. Although there is a smaller number of

private school students in the territory, I would like to hear the views and compare them with the public school students' experiences. Also, I would recommend further research on teachers lived experiences working with students who fail reading and comprehension. It would be interesting to hear their view and compare them with students' experiences.

Conclusion

The transcendental phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district. The theories used to guide this study are the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). The data collection methods were photographs using memes, interviews, and observations that were suitable to answer the central research questions and the three sub-questions. The findings from this study are that students long for more than a place called school. They require their holistic needs to be met through healthy relationships and meaningful engagement. If these needs are met, instructional engagement, classroom management outcomes, and social engagement will improve. Though students are provided with support from teachers, they lack healthy relationships and meaningful classroom interactive activities that would increase instructional engagement in classrooms. Also, the finding suggests that through healthy relationships among students and teachers, there would be a better understanding of how to effectively communicate and meet the needs of diverse learners and lessen behavioral issues in middle school classrooms.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

September 20, 2022

Carlyn Benjamin
Ellen Ziegler

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-84 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF DIVERSE LEARNERS IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS WHO FAILED THE FINAL EXAM IN READING AND COMPREHENSION AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Dear Carlyn Benjamin, Ellen Ziegler,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: September 20, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

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.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Permission Request

July 24th, 2022

██████████
Chief Education Officer
██████████
Ministry of Education & Culture
██
██
Virgin Islands (U.K)

Dear Dr. ██████████,

As a doctoral student at Liberty University, I am kindly requesting your permission to conduct a research study to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grades seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at Bregado Flax Educational Centre Secondary. I will like the students to take photographs using memes to describe their experiences in the classroom. Also, I would like to interview and observe these diverse learners across these grades. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Participants will be asked to conduct a one-on-one interview in a natural but private setting in your school's resource room for about 30-45 minutes during class hours. Interviews will be recorded for transcribing purposes; classroom instructions would be observed and noted 1 hour per day for 4 days within a month. The records of this study will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Recordings and other data will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased.

There is no direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, the data will help to gather first-hand information on the students' experiences in the school, analyze their shortcomings, and implement measures for students to be successful in reading and comprehension. The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on an official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

██████████

Carlyn Benjamin-Raymore

Appendix C: Permission Approval



Government of the Virgin Islands

[Redacted]

25th August, 2022

Mrs. Carlyn Benjamin-Raymore

[Redacted]

Dear Mrs. Benjamin-Raymore

RE: Research Study

Permission has been granted for you to conduct your research at the [Redacted]

Your choice of research and finding will be greatly beneficial to the Education System and the Territory. I wish you all the best in your studies and I look forward to you making a positive impact within the Territory.

[Redacted Signature]

Chief Education Officer (Ag.)

Appendix D: Student Recruitment

Hello Recipient,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand why students failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at Bregado Flax Educational Centre. The purpose of my research is to explore the lived experiences of diverse students in grade seven to nine who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the school year at a school in the Virgin Islands school district. If your child meets my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite your child to join my study. Participants must be a student at Bregado Flax Educational Centre and failed reading and comprehension at the end of year. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take home a consent/assent form for their parents to read and sign. They are asked to return the consent and assent attached within a week. During and after the study, I will verify the findings to ensure I have accurate information. I would like you to take at least one photograph using a meme to about your classroom experience, you which will share before you start the interview. After the interview, classroom observations will follow. It should take approximately 30-45 minutes to share your picture and complete your interview and one hour per week for over four weeks to do observations in the classroom during reading and comprehension. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you allow your child/student to participate? Yes, Great. Would you mind having the consent form signed by you and the assent signed by your child and returned by handing it to the guidance counsellor at the school? Can we set up a time for an interview at the school. No, I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent and assent documents will be sent home with your child one week before the interview. The consent and assent documents contain additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you and your child will need to sign the both documents and return them to me on the day of the scheduled interview. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent and assent information and would like to take part in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Sincerely,

Carlyn Benjamin

PhD Student

Appendix E: Parental Consent Form

Title of the Study: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY RESEARCH ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF DIVERSE LEARNERS IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL WHO FAILED THE FINAL EXAM IN READING AND COMPREHENSION AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Principal Investigator: Carlyn Benjamin-Raymore, Ph.D. Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your child is invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, he/she must be a student in grades 7-9 and failed reading and comprehension at the end of the school year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of students in grades 7-9 who failed the final exam in reading and comprehension at the end of the term at Bregado Flax Educational Centre. Sharing these experiences will provide the ideas that can be implemented to help students be successful in reading comprehension and fluency.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Take at least one photograph of yourself (5-10 minutes):
 - a. Use a meme in the photograph(s) to describe your classroom experience.
 - b. Print or email the picture(s) to me, and bring the picture(s) to the interview.
2. Participate in a one-on-one interview in a natural but private setting (school resource office) for about 30-35 minutes during class hours.
3. Permit me to observe your natural classroom setting (4 hours).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

There is no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include ideas would be gathered to enhance instructional approach and teaching practices in diverse middle school classrooms.

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.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and all electronic records will be deleted after three years upon the completion of the study.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings and other data will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

How to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Carlyn Benjamin-Raymore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ellen Ziegler at [REDACTED].

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child 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 my child as part of his/her participation in this study.

Printed Child's/Student's Name

Parent's Signature

Date

Minor's Signature

Date

Appendix F: Photograph Prompts

Students will use the prompts to take pictures after parental consent and assent are given.

1. Using your phone/camera, take at least one picture of yourself.
2. Use a meme or memes in the photographs that describe your experience in the classroom.
3. Ensure that your photographs are clear.
4. Store the photographs in a safe place on your phone or camera.
5. If you prefer, you can print the pictures or email it to me.
6. Bring the pictures with you on the day of the interview

Appendix G: Photographs Discussions

Researcher's Checklist

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Time: _____

(i). Describe how the photograph you selected influenced your performance in reading and comprehension. **SQ1**

(ii). How do you think the meme you chose describes your social interaction in classroom activities? **SQ2**

(iii). How do you think the instructional methods that the teacher uses influenced your photograph choice? (**SQ3**)

Express Feeling/s	Explain in Detail
*	

Appendix H: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we met one another for the first time.
2. I would like you to explain what you would do if you do not understand a reading comprehension lesson?
3. How do you get support in reading and comprehension from you teachers in the classroom and in the reading resource room?
4. During instruction, students would do different things for many reasons. What do you do usually do when the teacher is teaching a reading comprehension lesson?
5. I know that we have subjects that we like a lot and get excited when the teacher talks about them. Tell me a little more about one such subject.
6. Tell me about your experiences in the classroom when you have to work on assigned reading comprehension activities.
7. Now, it is your time to change things. There might be something that you wish to see differently in your classroom. What would you like to happen in the classroom that you think would help you enjoy your learning experience?
8. Suppose I am a new student in your class, and I ask you to tell me about what I expect in your daily routine, what would your response be?
9. I remember being in the classroom when terrible things happened, and I was like: “What a day!” Explain that kind of experience when you thought it was a dreadful day for you.
10. Now that you have told me about what your dreadful day is like, tell me about the struggles that you experience in your classroom during reading sessions?
11. How do you respond to these challenges?
12. I heard a lot about your classroom experiences, which will prepare you for the future. How do you think the experience in the reading resources classroom prepared you to be promoted to the next level academically?

13. We spoke a lot about your experience. You took the time to share a ton about yourself in the classroom, and I appreciate it. Before you leave, I have another question that I would like to think deeply about and share your answer. What else do you think would be important for me to know about your diverse learning experience in the classroom?

Appendix I: Observation Data Collection Procedures

Researcher's Checklist

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Physical Setting:

Time:

Date:

Observation

Events	Comments
* Participation during whole class and group reading comprehension sessions (Q2)	
* Teacher provides needed support (Q3)	
* Attentiveness and social interaction during class instructions. (Q4)	
* Preparedness and organization for class (Q8)	
* Ability to complete reading comprehension assignments (Q6)	

<u>Descriptive Notes</u>	<u>Reflective Notes</u>
<p data-bbox="204 342 424 376">Physical Setting:</p> <p data-bbox="204 712 437 745">Events/ Activities</p>	<p data-bbox="809 342 943 376">Thoughts:</p> <p data-bbox="809 712 943 745">Problems:</p>