

PARENT AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON ATTACHMENT/RELATIONSHIPS AND
CHILDREN'S SELF-REGULATION

by

Elaina Arnold

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Parent-child attachment and teacher-child relationships had individually shown an impact on children's self-regulation. There has been little research, however, showing the impact of the parents' and teachers' attachment/relationship on children's self-regulation at both home and school. This qualitative descriptive study examined the relationship between both the parent and teacher attachment/relationship with self-regulation in children 1-4 years old. Participants included 6 parents (mothers and fathers) with a child in childcare and 5 teachers of these children. Participants took part in a 30–40-minute semi-structured interview that was transcribed. The parents' and teachers' descriptions and perceptions of their relationship/attachment with the child, the child's self-regulation, and the impact of the relationships on the child's self-regulation were assessed. This research provides parent and teacher perspectives on the importance of communication and reveals that parent and teacher behaviors vary in responding to the child's needs in times of stress. A common theme was consistency and routines. Teachers were found to engage in closer interactions and conversation for longer periods of time throughout the day, which may suggest that both relationships need to be secure for strong self-regulation to form, although further research is needed to substantiate this. This research justifies the importance of these relationships and skills currently being used with positive results at home and school, and it establishes a connection between both parent and teacher perspectives on relationships and self-regulation. It supports prior research findings and theories including attachment and bioecological theory along with biblical foundations. It can aid in the development of parental and teacher trainings focusing on attachment and the importance of modeling on self-regulation skills.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. My boys (Caleb, Colt, and Dustin), who I want to know that all things are possible if you set your mind to it and pray. My husband, who has put up with my stress, limited sleep, and overall anxiety. My mom, who has always been my biggest supporter and help. Tina Smith, I could not leave you out after all our years of friendship, you are one I know will always be there. I love you all very much and could not complete this journey without you by my side.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Self-regulation is important for individuals to regulate their emotions and make a lasting impact on their daily lives (Paley & Hajal, 2022). Schultheis et al.'s (2019) research shows that self-regulation is important for individuals to manage emotional experiences successfully. Early parent-child attachment (Perry et al., 2018) and teacher-child relationships (Acar et al., 2018) mold children's understanding of emotions, helping them gain strategies to aid in coping during high-stress situations. In the Bible self-regulation is discussed under the terms of *self-control* and *anger*; God instructs Christians to be slow to anger and to surrender to God, giving up control.

Research involving early childhood educators (Lui et al., 2022) and secure parental attachment (Pathast et al., 2021) has shown the significance of these relationships on children gaining self-regulation; although, currently little to no research surrounds self-regulation skills while looking at both parental attachment and the teacher-child relationship. In the Bible, God tells Christians exactly what is expected from a child, parents, and those who teach. God wants parents to train up their children to follow him, while he expects children to honor, obey, and listen to their parents. God also instructs those with the gift for teaching to use their gifts to mold and teach their students God's word.

Background

Self-regulation

Numerous studies have been conducted on self-regulation. Pathast et al. (2021) showed the toddler years are essential to the development of self-regulation in children. According to Veijalainen et al. (2018), self-regulation skills are important for these young children to recognize and manage emotions. When self-regulation skills are lacking children struggle with a lack of social competence and school adjustment. Braund and Timmons (2021) showed the importance of self-regulation in young children's healthy development; however, there is a lack of understanding of self-regulation skills by teachers, policymakers, and scholars on how to best incorporate day-to-day support in the learning environment.

Paley and Hajal (2022) pointed to early childhood being a critical time for children's emotion regulation through the shifting from being dependent on caregivers to transitioning to taking control themselves. Research has shown growth of early self-regulation is important for positive well-being, achievement, and health throughout an individual's lifespan, with significant predictors of self-regulation being the lower incidence of behavioral sleep problems (restless, tantrums, hard to comfort, easily distracted, etc.) along with higher gross motor skills, less angry parenting, and pre-academic skills through higher home learning and child-teacher relationships (Williams & Howard, 2020). Booth et al. (2019), through children's descriptions, learned that self-regulation in school-aged children is challenged through transitions between settings and activities that include external school environments, although the playground provided self-regulation failure by children having to manage social interactions without external support.

Housman et al. (2018) noted that children aged 0-6 years are in a sensitive developmental period of emotional competence learning to understand, identify, regulate, and express emotions that are fundamental in the development of self-regulation. Emotional competence self-regulation learning aids in teaching young children emotion knowledge and regulation by adults talking children through emotional experiences (Housman et al., 2018). Housman et al. (2018) showed that through teaching, significant improvements were shown in children's attachment/relationships, self-regulation, emotion regulation, and knowledge, with children improving in prosocial skills and their ability to express and identify emotions. Self-regulation is important not only for young children growing up but also as they become adults and get jobs that involve collaborating with other individuals.

Braund and Timmons (2021) found parents' and teachers' ability to identify signals of stress and causes while teaching ways to manage/alleviate the stressors aids in young children's achievement of self-regulation. Research has shown that skills for self-regulation are developed through the preschool years (Braund & Timmons, 2021). Self-regulation skills require children's attention skills, working memory, and cognitive flexibility along with planning and problem-solving skills (Braund & Timmons, 2021). Through various research discussed by Housman et al. (2018), neuroscience advancement along with child development has shown that the age range of 0-6 years is important in young children's development of emotional competence, with the foundation of the development surrounding children's ability to identify, express, understand, and regulate emotions.

Housman et al. (2018) discussed the importance of teaching emotional competence and self-regulation skills from birth using interventions that highlight co-regulation. According to Veijalainen et al. (2019), self-regulation is viewed as both a learned concept and a developmental concept, where children's ability to regulate themselves is influenced by their age and through co-regulation of teachers/parents.

Self-Regulation Biblically

Self-regulation is not specifically discussed in the Bible; however, the Bible talks about self-control and anger. Nehemiah, who went back to Jerusalem to reconstruct the wall after exodus while others came to attack, shows self-control by not fighting back but placing guards while the wall was being built (Nehemiah 4, *English Standard Version*, 2001). Nehemiah reacted calmly and with self-control in times of high stress. Children, parents, and teachers can learn about God's teaching of self-control and anger through 2 Timothy 1:7 (*English Standard Version*, 2001), which says, "for God gave us a spirit not to fear but of power and love and self-control." Christians make use of self-control when they give up trying to control things in their lives and they surrender to God for help/guidance in all that they do.

Parent-Child Attachment

Parental attachment is important when looking at parental responses to children through the promotion or inhibiting of emotion regulation in young children. Mortazavizadeh et al. (2022) examined authoritative parenting style and how it was associated with children's emotional competence through the positive and negative emotions of parents affecting those positive or negative emotions in their children. Grady (2020) used parents' reports to show that shy toddlers' parents were less supportive

during the experience of negative emotions, with parents minimizing negative emotions in shy boys more than shy girls through minimizing, dismissing, or punishing emotional displays, leading to poor emotion regulation throughout development. Booth et al. (2019) discussed that children's emotional challenges encompass parental separation during school times with children feeling negative emotions/distress in peer situations.

According to Fernandes et al. (2021), the parent-child attachment relationship provided opportunities for young children to develop and acquire emotional regulatory skills, finding that both mother and father attachment relationships being secure predicted better emotion regulation skills in young children. Ahmetoglu et al. (2018) have shown that parental minimization reactions to children's emotions are related to children's emotion regulation and parental attachment; that is, children with poor emotion regulation displayed higher attachment to parents than those with greater emotion regulation. Ahmetoglu et al. (2018) showed that children with poor emotion regulation skills felt a greater need to be attached to their mothers; however, the mother felt this as a negative approach from the children and reacted punitively toward the children. Ahmetoglu et al. (2018) has shown that parental minimization reactions to children's emotions are related to children's emotion regulation and to parental attachment; that is, children with poor emotion regulation displayed higher attachment to parents than those with greater emotion regulation. Ahmetoglu et al. (2018) showed that children with poor emotion regulation skills felt the greater need to be attached to the mother; however, the mother felt this as a negative approach from the children and reacted punitively toward the children.

According to Neel et al. (2017), parental relationships are a critical social factor in young children's development. Authoritative parenting aids in improved child cognition and behavior (Neel et al., 2017). Dindo et al. (2017) noted that attachment security and effortful control predicted achievement in academics years later through attachment security promoting effortful control. The attachment quality of relationships with children's caregivers is key in early childhood to trigger meaningful cascades that aid in effortful control and later academic success through emotional understanding (Dindo et al., 2017). Williams and Howard (2020) found that parental involvement during in-home learning activities with their children has also been shown to aid in children's self-regulatory development. According to Mortazavizadeh et al. (2022), the positive and negative emotions of parents affect the positive and negative emotions in their children; a better understanding of parental support and greater self-regulation was seen through greater emotional support.

Biblical Parent-Child Relationship

The Bible directs the parent-child relationship by teaching parents to guide their children in the way they should go (following God's word), not provoking/embittering their young children, and disciplining them (Colossian 3:21, Proverbs 22:6, 13:24, *English Standard Version*, 2001). Children through God's word are instructed to honor their mother/father, listen to their instructions, and follow their teachings (Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 1:8, *English Standard Version*, 2001). Parents understand that their children are a gift from God, and they should never hinder them from God or his teachings. God wants parents to guide their children to His word, provide for them, love them, and show them the love of God.

Teacher-Child Relationship

Teacher-child interaction quality and engaged support for children during learning were associated positively with children's attention and inhibitory control benefiting young children's self-regulation (Salminen et al., 2019). Salminen et al. (2019) investigated how early childhood education teachers aid in toddlers' development by supporting language, cognition, and engagement through safe welcoming environments, support, supporting problem-solving skills, and teacher-provided clear proactive strategies. Acar et al. (2021; 2022) found that teacher-child conflict is strongly related to young children's stress and negative attitudes and teacher-child closeness is shown related to positive attitudes and social competence. Research has shown that close teacher-child relationships are strongly associated with self-regulation along with children's learning behavior (Acar et al., 2021; 2022).

Through the implementation of social-emotional learning in early childhood education settings, findings showed that young children's wellbeing and development have been improved during childhood into adolescence and adulthood (Moazami-Goodarzi et al., 2021). Moazami-Goodarzi et al. (2021) found that social-emotional learning aids in children's development in regulating their emotions, building secure and stable relationships, solving problems, and coping with stressful situations. If the relationship with these teachers is not secure, these skills are not as likely to be formed. Early childhood educators play a critical role in facilitating social-emotional skills in young children who are rapidly increasing in emotional, social, and cognitive development (Mozazmi-Goodarzi et al., 2021).

According to William and Howard (2020), positive student-teacher relationships are important because they set the environment so teachers can enact strategies that are key to gaining self-regulation through the preschool development period through modeling, coaching, and coregulation to aid in children's regulation. According to Veijalainen et al. (2019), teachers should have the skills to recognize children's characteristics in supporting their development of self-regulation skills; teachers need to know and recognize strategies children use for self-regulation along with modeling problem-solving strategies for these young children. According to Cadima et al. (2019), teachers aid in facilitating sustained and active engagement for children during activities through conversations that model appropriate self-regulation, which enables children to practice and enhance their self-regulation skills. Through children being provided the chance to direct their learning, teachers place a greater emphasis on providing choices where children in return select more challenging and stimulating activities that provide opportunities for children to improve their self-regulation skills (Cadima et al., 2019). According to Belweitt et al. (2021), teachers were able to foster children's social and emotional learning positively through responsive and nurturing relationships, targeting support through everyday experiences/interactions, influences through visual aids, layout, and organization of the physical environment, and the importance of collaborating with parents in a partnership.

An abundance of research has shown that children's relationships with teachers are important for improvements in self-regulatory competence through teachers' positive management of children's behavior and self-regulation skills (Cadima et al., 2019). According to Booth et al. (2019), children described their teachers and friends as an

important influence on how they self-regulate, showing that a teacher who is available for support helps them to navigate the environment by acting as a referee along with providing comfort. According to Acar et al. (2022), conflict within the teacher-child relationship is shown to be significantly linked to children's stress and negative attitudes when looking at school and learning; these conflicts are noted when children show aggression at the start of school.

Teacher-Child Relationship Biblically

In the Bible, teacher-child relationships are not specifically discussed; however, through the Bible Christians understand that teaching is a gift from God and should be treated as that. Romans 12:6-7 (*English Standard Version*, 2001) states: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if in service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teachings....;". Teachers should use their gift of teaching to mold these young children to optimal development. Teachers should care for children the way that God directs, aiding in their learning and development, optimally through God's will.

Problem Statement

Self-regulation is important for young children to manage emotional experiences successfully (Schulthies et al., 2019). Young children's ability to regulate their emotions is molded throughout their early childhood years/experiences (Paley & Hajal, 2018; Vajjalainen et al., 2018). Children learn to manage highly emotional situations through self-regulation by being able to understand and manage their behaviors/actions (Schulthies et al., 2019). The Bible teaches self-regulation through the self-control of individuals through the story of Nehemiah who reacted calmly and with self-control

during his journey to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-7; *English Standard Version*, 2001).

Parental attachment has been extensively researched and shown to play a vital role in children's development of self-regulation through modeling coping strategies (Pathast et al., 2021) and parental sensitivity/acceptance (Pallini et al., 2018), along with helping young children to understand emotions/behaviors and responses (Carreras et al., 2019; Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022). Parents with secure attachments aid children in feeling supported and knowing they have support when stressful situations occur (Carreras et al., 2019). In the Bible, parents are taught to train their children in the way they should go, while children are directed to honor their father/mother along with listening/following their instructions/teachings (Proverbs 22:6, Exodus 20:12, & Proverbs 1:8-9, *English Standard Version*, 2001).

Early childhood educators also have been shown to play a key role in supporting young children's social/emotional development skills (Liu et al., 2022). Research has shown teachers help young children gain these skills through conversations about their feelings (Bailey et al., 2019), teaching problem-solving skills, modeling coping strategies, and providing an emotionally supportive climate (Acar et al., 2018; Blewitt et al., 2021).

A vast amount of research has shown the importance of parental and teacher attachment playing an important part in children's development of self-regulation. However, there is limited research addressing the combined influence of parental and teacher attachments on children's self-regulation. It would be beneficial to explore if one attachment relationship compensates for the lack of the other in children's development

of self-regulation, along with examining if having secure attachments in both relationships is greater than just one. Exploring these factors will aid in understanding if one relationship can compensate for another to foster self-regulation in children, allow research to show the importance of both attachment figures in early childhood settings, and aid in therapeutic changes for children.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative descriptive study explores parent and teacher perspectives on parent-child and teacher-child attachment/relationships. This study will also examine parent/teacher perspective on the relationship between parent and teacher attachment with self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old.

Research Question(s)

Research Questions

RQ1: How do parents and teachers describe the relationship/attachment with their children ages 1-4 years old?

RQ 2: How do parents and teachers describe self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old?

RQ 3: How do parents and teachers describe the impact of the parent-child and teacher-child relationship/attachment on children's development of self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old?

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that it may not allow for a geographic scope of participants as this study takes place in a select few star-rated (quality-rated improvement system measured on a scale of 1-5; with 5 ensuring the highest level of quality care) early

childhood centers. Also, these centers are within a rural area that may not allow for a vast variety of children from different socioeconomic statuses. Also, these centers are within a rural area that may not allow for a vast variety of children among different socioeconomic statuses.

The analysis of parent and teacher interview methods may lead to exaggerated results or results that are inaccurate due to embarrassment. The limitations on time restraints for interviews can prove a challenge for the teachers in this study. This study is also qualitative and will not be verified through statistical analysis. Assumptions include that participants answer honestly or that they have the knowledge to give information needed through wording and perceptions.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Prior research strongly supports that expression and emotion regulation are related to attachment (Mortazaviadeh et al., 2022). Mortazaviadeh et al. (2022) discussed attachment theory, noting that children's emotions are affected by the child-caregiver relationship through various phases of development, pointing to Bowlby's and Ainsworth's work with attachment theory, which showed that parental attachment style is important in the development of young children's social and emotional skills. Through attachment theory, Mortazaviadeh et al. (2022) noted that inadequate emotion regulation is seen with a dismissive parenting style. Bowlby's and Ainsworth's research on attachment showed an emotional bond between children and caregivers with the caregivers playing a key role throughout the young child's life (Motazaviadeh et al., 2022). Motazaviadeh et al. (2022) learned through Bowlby and Ainsworth that the quality

of caregiving that included responding consistently and quickly will aid in children learning to trust/depend on the caregivers responsible for their care.

Secure attachment is seen when children can depend on the primary caregivers with the most significant indicator shown when children are separated from the attachment figure are becoming upset; however, they are secure in the caregiver's return along with showing signs of comfort when need reassurance from the caregivers (Motazaviadeh et al., 2022). Insecure attachment in Motzazviadeh et al.'s (2022) research while understanding Bowlby and Ainsworth's work is discussed through the term's ambivalent attachment, avoidant attachment, and disorganized attachment. Ambivalent attachments are seen when children cannot depend on the caregiver when needed along with becoming highly distressed when the caregiver leaves (Motazavizdeh et al., 2022). Avoidant attachments are seen when the children avoid the caregiver/parent with no distinction between caregiver or an unknown person (Motazavizadeh et al., 2022). Disorganized attachment involves inconsistency in the caregiver's behavior with children showing signs of confusion and/or disorientation (Motazavizadeh et al., 2022). Ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized attachment are all viewed as insecure attachment styles.

Bioecological theory (Liu et al., 2020) explained how the experiences of children during one developmental setting are important for adjustment during other developmental stages. This theory has shown the interactional processes between children and others in microsystems (settings including certain physical characteristics, activity patterns, resources, and roles, along with interpersonal relationships) play a key role in children's adjustment in any microsystem; for example, children's adjustment to

school includes their experiences at school as well as with families and afterschool programs (Liu et al., 2020). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of development was discussed as a transactional process throughout an individual's development and affected by various interactions through a variety of spheres and aspects in their environment (Liu et al., 2020). Bronfenbrenner's theory separated an individual's environment into five different systems. The first level consists of the microsystem including a direct impact on children's immediate environment such as peers, siblings, parents, and teachers. The mesosystem involved interactions with the microsystem, which includes family, community, school, church, etc. The exosystem included formal/informal social structures that do not have to contain the child, which involves the neighborhood, parent's friends and workplace, and systems of mass media. The macrosystem included the cultural aspect including poverty, ethnicity, and socioeconomic system, and the chronosystem through environmental changes; with the impact of one system depending on the relationship with the others (Liu et al., 2020).

Biblically, attachment theory as well as bioecological theory, is understood through the relationship between parents and children through God's description of how the relationship should be. Children are told to honor and obey, while parents are told to train their children and teach them the Lord's word.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms used in this study.

Self-regulation – is a multidimensional, complex construct that pertains to children's ability to intentionally accommodate thoughts and plans, emotions, and actions for certain situations or environments (Salminen et al., 2020). Williams and Howard (2020)

define self-regulation as control/adaptive functioning over emotion, cognition, and behavior.

Parent-child attachment style – attachment styles are characterized by the behaviors within the parent-child relationship and can be categorized as secure or insecure with the ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized attachment being shown as distinct levels of insecure attachment (Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022).

Teacher-child relationship – a modifiable factor, conceptualized under two dimensions (closeness & conflict) between the teacher and child (Acar et al., 2022), that can support or harm language, engagement, and cognition (Salminen et al., 2022).

Significance of the Study

This study will be beneficial in showing the parent and teachers perspective of the attachment relationship and how they view the effect on children's self-regulation. This research can pave the way for future studies to examine these aspects quantitatively. This research intends to show the importance of both parent and teacher relationships in the early childhood setting and aid in therapeutic changes for children. It may provide childcare teachers with a greater standard of care, which can help teachers to understand and focus on additional support for children to gain improved self-regulation skills.

Through this study, greater understanding can be gained to aid in resources for parents and teachers to foster attachments that will increase children's self-regulation. Such resources may provide for curriculum changes to aid in self-regulation through a strong focus on problem-solving skills, communication, and expression of feelings. Research in this area can provide information to those involved in young children's

development to improve parenting classes and teacher training to help foster secure attachments needed to help young children develop optimally.

Summary

An abundance of research surrounds the self-regulation of young children and the effects on their development through parental attachment or the teacher-child relationship; however, there is a lack of research showing the effects of both these relationships when looking at young children's self-regulation. Various research studies have shown that a secure parental attachment aids in children's development (Schultheis et al., 2019).

This study seeks to explore both the parent-child and teacher-child relationship and provide the parent/teacher's perspective on the impact of attachment on children's development of self-regulation. Such findings can aid in therapeutic changes, a greater understanding of the development of children's self-regulation, and teacher/parent resources. This research can pave the way for greater advancements in social-emotional learning through early childhood.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Numerous studies have shown the importance of secure parent-child attachment or teacher-child relationship when looking at children's emotion regulation, suggesting that early childhood is a crucial time of development (Blewitt et al., 2021; Paley & Hajal, 2022). These studies focused on attachment theory, sociocultural theory, and programme theory to understand the importance of attachment relationships in young children's emotion regulation. The importance of self-regulation in young children's lives is to enable them to manage their emotional experiences through understanding and learning strategies to cope with highly stressful situations (Schultheis et al., 2019).

Biblically, parents and children gain an understanding of how their relationship should be formed through God's word, how each should strengthen their relationship, and what each role entails. Although teachers' relationships are not discussed in-depth in the Bible, an understanding is gained by looking at teaching as a gift to mold and aid in young children's lives. Through self-control, Christians gain a clearer understanding of self-regulation and how Christians should use self-control in times of need. One example of where this is learned is through the story of Nehemiah. discussed in-depth in the Bible, an understanding is gained by looking at teaching as a gift to mold and aid in young children's lives. Through self-control, Christians gain a clearer understanding of self-regulation and how Christians should use self-control in times of need. One example of where this is learned is through the story of Nehemiah.

Description of Search Strategy

Jerry Falwell Library advanced search was used with any type set for content, language, and discipline along with a publication date set within 5 years. Limitations were set to include items with full text online, peer-reviewed publications, and open access items only, along with excluding from results newspaper articles, book reviews, and dissertations. Keywords including emotion regulation, parental attachment (parent-child attachment), teacher-child relationship (teacher-child attachment), religious attachment, interpersonal conflict, and insecure attachment to God, were used to find resources.

Biblical research was conducted through word studies to gain a clearer understanding of what the Bible teaches about emotion regulation (*self-control* and *anger*), how parents are instructed to raise their children, how children are directed to treat their parents, and what God directs for those who teach.

Review of Literature

Self-regulation

Self-regulation involves an individual's ability to regulate his or her emotions, with early childhood being a key time in development because children are moving from being highly dependent to showing control over their emotions without the strong support of the caregiver (Paley & Hajal, 2022). Through a variety of prior research, Squires and Mafra (2021) discussed voluntary/intentional self-regulation development, starting in infancy, and continuing throughout adolescence, with rapid development occurring during early childhood. Vaijalainen et al. (2018) examined the significance of good coping skills when looking at self-regulation by showing the importance of teachers using teaching strategies to enhance the relationship between the teacher-child and enhance

children's self-regulation. Through children's entrance into school, self-regulation is challenged through the experience of major changes in their expectations in the classroom and their physical surroundings (Booth et al., 2019). Booth et al. (2019) discussed the transitions in these environments engaging children's self-regulation through teacher-directed activities and moving through various activities throughout the day. Through sociocultural theory, Booth et al. (2019) pointed to the early development of young children being molded by contextual factors through interactions with their environment, peers, and adults. day. Through socio-cultural theory, Booth et al. (2019) pointed to the early development of young children being molded by contextual factors through interactions with their environment, peers, and adults.

Utilizing parental research, mothers with a tendency to suppress their emotions with poor emotion awareness showed less interest in their own child's mental state, showing that parental interventions focusing on emotion regulation will aid in enhancing the child's emotion regulation (Schultheis et al., 2019). Perry et al. (2018) examined parental behaviors showing they play a key role in young children's self-regulation through the regulation of arousal/behavior during infancy, which slowly develops these young children's self-sufficiency in controlling their actions/emotions. Sensitive parenting through meeting the child's needs at times of high emotional stress, along with responding to the child's failed attempts at self-regulation in a supportive manner, aids in showing children how to down-regulate arousal along with controlling their behavior impulses (Perry et al., 2018). In modeling self-regulation, parents of young children guide them in learning strategies to self-regulate and build on the foundation of self-regulation

by increasing in-depth social, cognitive, and emotional experiences to aid in their practice of self-regulation.

Squires and Manfra's (2021) research discussed preschoolers endogenously triggered self-regulation, meaning internally generated within the preschooler during the absence of external instruction, and exogenously triggered self-regulation, meaning externally driven inhibition (i.e., verbal instruction). Young preschoolers' daily activities often require the use of endogenously triggered self-regulation, such as the need to regulate the emotions of wanting to take a toy from a friend; these children will often require additional external support to help regulate themselves (Squires & Manfra, 2021). Squires and Manfra's (2021) study consisted of a pour task (pouring from one cup to another without overfilling or spilling) finding that preschoolers demonstrate endogenously triggered regulation while looking at socially learned responses along with showing they are competent in demonstrating both endogenously- and exogenously-triggered regulation. Veijalainen et al. (2019) investigated adults' support during play activities and enriched materials can encourage and aid in children's learning of coping strategies. These results showed the importance of the relationships in the child's life, including the parent and the teacher with communication about coping strategies. Veijalainen et al.'s (2019) research showed that good self-regulation is enhanced with persistent coping strategies along with being persistent in stimulated circumstances while self-regulation seen as weak is shown through children's withdrawal/uncertain coping strategies or abandoning stimulated circumstances.

This research points to prior research findings discussed by Hong et al. (2017). An important aspect of self-regulation is delaying gratification and showing the

importance of self-regulation while looking at individual differences of the child such as temperament or gender. Research conducted by Hong et al. (2017) showed that children's temperament and gender impacted gratification delay time, with girls being able to delay gratification longer than boys, and children scoring higher on activity level being less able to delay gratification. Hong et al. (2017) also found that there were interactions between activity level and spontaneous attention deployment while looking at self-regulatory behavior.

Self-regulation is a learned developmental concept key to an individual's successful emotional experiences. Early parent-child and teacher-child relationships mold children's understanding of emotions along with enabling them to gain strategies to cope with high-stress situations (Schultheis et al., 2019).

Parental attachment

Previous research has shown the importance of parental attachment for young children's growth, development, and self-regulation. Mortazavizadeh et al.'s (2022) research aided in understanding attachment and young children's regulation of emotions by examining co-regulation in the infant-parent relationship. These researchers found that children learn how to express their emotions through their observations of their primary attachment figures. Pallini et al. (2018) showed the importance of secure attachment relationships in serving a regulatory function when looking at children's behavior, emotions, and social cognition. Pallini et al.'s (2018) has shown that children with secure organized attachments scored higher in effortful self-regulation than those with insecure attachments.

Parent-child attachment in the toddler years is shown to be essential in young children's development of self-regulation. Pathast et al. (2021) found that maternal sensitivity and acceptance support young children's self-regulation development. Pallini et al. (2018) described the secure attachment between parents and children and showed parents have regulatory functions regarding children's behaviors, emotions, and social cognition. Carreras et al. (2019) described the sensitive parent as aware of their child's emotions, able to understand them, and responding to them appropriately. Both studies suggest that sensitive/secure parental attachments are needed for emotion and self-regulation to be learned by helping children better understand their emotions and teaching regulatory functions. Through positive, sensitive, nurturing relationships with parents, young children observe how to respond in high-stress situations along with being supported. Perry et al.'s (2018) research pointed out that mothers who are overcontrolling during toddlerhood negatively impacted children's emotion regulation.

Ahmetoglu et al. (2018) examined parental emotion socialization, parental attachment, and children's emotion regulation, finding that girls showed more secure attachments than boys to their parents, and children with poor emotion regulation tended to remain close to their mothers. Research is vast in showing the significance of parental relationships on young children's development specifically when looking at self-regulation. Previous research showed that children with strong attachments to their parents can regulate their emotions while exposed to external stress while also developing positive core beliefs that lead to advances in their sense of self (Ahmetoglu et al., 2019).

Crespo et al. (2018; 2019) examined young children's self-regulation while examining household chaos (instability) and children's behavior problems finding that

greater household chaos was shown to result in behavior problems, but only with children with poorer self-regulation. Crespo et al.'s, (2018; 2019) study did not find an association between household chaos and self-regulation; however, it offers an explanation that self-regulation develops rapidly in toddlerhood and there is a possibility that household chaos does not directly interfere with self-regulation until later in the preschool or school years. Additionally, Hong et al. (2017) showed that family income had a positive correlation with a delay of gratification for children, suggesting that children from higher-income families could delay longer in a task than those from lower-income families. Therefore, household chaos and income may play a role in the attachment of young children by impacting the feeling of their needs being met and their feeling safe/secure.

Through prior research, Perry et al. (2018) indicated that children's ability to self-regulate behaviors and emotions to change environmental demands is one of the greatest fundamental skills that develop in early childhood and throughout one's lifespan. Perry et al. (2018) found that overcontrolling parenting throughout toddlerhood impacted children's adjustment during adolescence based on the early development of self-regulatory skills. Perry et al. (2018) discussed toddlerhood being a time for desired greater independence in children that increased emotional challenges parents can hinder children's self-regulation at this time by trying to exert too much control, stepping in before the toddler can try and problem-solve, or physically keeping the children from the situations. Parents can hinder children's self-regulation by trying to exert too much control, stepping in before the toddler can try and problem-solve, or physically keeping the children from the situations.

Davies et al. (2017) detailed the importance of internal representations in young children's development, by discussing that when family interactions escalated to become problematic it undermined the child's ability to cope effectively and served as a source that threatened their well-being. Through insecure relationships, young children struggle to feel supported, secure, and safe, which leads to an increased risk for self-regulation difficulties along with disruptive behavior (Davies et al., 2017). Davies et al.'s (2017) research found that children's negative family representations led to decreases in children's attention to negative emotional stimuli, suggesting that these children's negative representations function as filters to defensively prevent encoding regarding distressing interpersonal themes/cues.

Schultheis et al. (2019) pointed to the importance of parents being able to use emotion regulation during times of stress in caregiving for an infant in a caring, sensitive way, which helps the young infant learn the parent's style of self-regulating. They also found that mothers with less emotional awareness reported lower levels of interest in their own children's mental state (Schultheis et al., 2019). Carreras et al.'s (2019) research showed that difficulties in emotion regulation are a mediator between sensitive parenting and parents' psychological distress, with difficulties in emotion regulation predicting a decrease in sensitive parenting behaviors. Through this research, parents' emotion regulation is shown to serve as a predictor of secure parent-child attachment. Carreras et al. (2019) investigated the importance of regulation of emotional reactions to engage in sensitive parenting to young children, which is key to providing a secure attachment with young children.

Prior research examining maternal sensitivity has shown it to be a key factor in the development of young children's self-regulation. Ringoot et al. (2021; 2022) conducted a study on parents and their children aged 1-6 years old looking at maternal sensitivity through observation, mother and father reported harsh discipline, observation of the child's self-regulation, and the child reported peer aggression, victimization, and peer rejection. Ringoot et al.'s (2021; 2022) research showed that maternal sensitivity was associated with young children's behavioral self-regulation, along with lower levels of behavioral self-regulation resulting in higher peer aggression and relationship issues. Through this research, the child's behavioral self-regulation was not shown to mediate the relationship between peer relationship issues and maternal sensitivity, with higher levels of paternal harsh discipline showing a direct association with peer relationships (Ringoot et al., 2021; 2022). Ringoot et al.'s (2021; 2022) study examined maternal sensitivity and paternal harsh discipline play a key role in children's behavioral self-regulation and the quality of children's later peer relationships. This study showed that both maternal and paternal parenting practices should be examined because they may have various effects on the child's self-regulation (Ringoot et al., 2021; 2022).

Kok et al. (2022) study also showed that maternal sensitivity and supportive discipline were important for determining children's self-regulation. Kok et al. (2022) examined at the age of one the association between sensitive parenting, at age three supportive discipline, and children's self-regulation at ages three and four. Maternal sensitivity and supportive discipline were significantly associated with children's prolonged and immediate delay of gratification at 3 years old, and maternal sensitivity was significantly related to working memory skills at 4 years old with no evidence of

differential susceptibility to maternal parenting based on differences in cortisol stress response in infants (Kok et al., 2022). The various research on maternal sensitivity pointed to this being a key factor in children's self-regulation along with aiding in the attachment relationship between the mother and child.

The parent-child relationship has been heavily discussed through prior and current research, showing the significance of this relationship throughout young children's development. These prior studies have shown the importance of parents' sensitivity, discipline, and regulation abilities for young children's self-regulation. Parental attachment can affect children's development of self-regulation, with research showing many aspects of the relationship between a parent and child that are key in this development.

Teacher-Child Relationship

Recently much research has included the early childhood learning environment and those who instruct these young children. Blewitt et al.'s (2021) research has shown the importance of early childhood educators in supporting children's social and emotional development. Blewitt et al. (2021) suggested that the teacher-child relationship is critical in children's development through responsive nurturing and conversations that aid in children's greater understanding of their emotions/feelings. Acar et al. (2018) examined teacher-child relationships to show that closeness is significantly related to children's self-regulation along with teacher-child conflict having a negative impact on children's self-regulation.

Through successful teacher-child relationships, children see teachers using strategies to regulate their own emotions along with teaching the children problem-

solving skills that will aid in children's understanding. When schools incorporate emotionally supportive climates with positive relationships/interactions the young children are provided with the opportunity to try, fail, and work together to solve problems/issues and learn regulation skills to aid in issues that may arise in the future (Bailey et al., 2019). Liu et al.'s (2022) research showed that different developmental settings that children are in with adults vary in their uniqueness and context along with these relationships paving the foundation for the development of social and emotional skills. Early childhood teachers play a key role in strengthening young children's development of social and emotional competencies that will aid in their future learning, well-being, and health (Blewitt et al., 2021).

The early childhood learning environment has been shown throughout the research to be important in young children's growth and development. Arnott (2018), through prior research findings, discussed the importance of the preschool environment in shaping children's negotiations and self-regulation approaches through their interpretation of the information in the environment along with applying the information to regulate behaviors, emotions, and thoughts. In this environment young children explore chances to develop empathy and to demonstrate leadership along with teacher-provided rules/regulations shown to shape socio-emotional self-regulation (Arnott, 2018). Arnott (2018) noted that adults in these settings hold absolute control although children's perceptions of the environment contribute to their behavior and interactions.

Throughout the early childhood environment, there are various times that children learn, and teachers can support young children's development. Malek-Lasater et al.'s (2022) research surrounded supporting the healthy development of children during

mealtimes in the early childhood setting through high-quality teaching practices along with behavioral support that includes sensitive and responsive interactions between the teacher and child. Malek-Lasater et al. (2022) discussed the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) noting that high-quality teaching practices guide teachers to function as role models when using problem-solving skills, behaviors, and attitudes when instructing young children. These key high-quality teaching practices aid in the secure relationships between teachers and children, which in turn aids in the children feeling secure, their needs being met, and the teacher being dependable in times of high stress. In the early childhood classroom, the day is embedded with a variety of contexts and routines. Malek-Laster et al. (2022) pointed out that at meal-time teachers seem to be less engaging and interactive. Malek-Laster et al.'s (2022) results showed that teachers were strong in leading conversations, but not at peer modeling or promoting self-regulation during eating.

The environment in an early learning environment is important when considering the emotional and instructional support of young children's development. Karuppiah (2021) conducted research in a Singapore preschool classroom on the quality of teacher-child interactions looking at emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. This study found that the class size was large, and activities were teacher-directed, which meant less child talk/conversations and little time for support or scaffolding for the individual child's development (Karuppiah, 2021). Karuppiah (2021) mentioned that when broken into smaller groups, teachers could provide more positive support. In addition, children who require more attention could pose an issue in maintaining quality teacher-child relationships with other children. Through Perry et al.'s

(2018) research, a key point is made that self-regulatory skills at the end of the early childhood developmental period when these children are transitioning to school are significant due to these children forming relationships within the school context.

Imai-Matsumura and Schultz (2021) conducted a study using the Social Thinking and Academic Readiness Training program on first-grade Japanese students and found that children who received the training showed significant improvements in their self-regulation compared to those in standard practice groups. Their program requested teachers' use of stop commands during behavioral events that needed correcting and aided children in being able to concentrate and listen (Imai-Matsumura & Schultz, 2021). Through this program, teachers used six lessons based on the GOALS program developed in the United States that promotes emotional, social, and academic skills with attention placed on ignoring distractions to help promote children's ability to cope, problem-solve, understand causes and consequences, and gain an understanding of their feelings and the feelings of others through strong teacher direction and support (Imai-Matsumura & Schultz, 2021). Through this research, it is shown that teachers who implement programs to aid in children's self-regulation are supportive of these young children which leads to trusting relationships between the teacher and child.

Another key aspect in children learning self-regulation skills is how they learn right from wrong throughout the learning environment. Bailey et al. (2019) examined the "no excuses" approach to behavior management while examining the developmental science perspective on the regulatory skills of children with the suggestion that young children's early school years are a central context for developing and practicing self-regulation by the support of educators and peers, with a greater significance shown for

children who have experienced early developmental trauma. They discussed prior research that suggested the “no excuses” approach can undermine the development of self-regulation, which is a key central developmental skill along with being linked to academic achievement, long-term well-being, and social competence (Bailey et al., 2019). Bailey et al.’s (2019) discussion encompassed the developmental research that it takes time to build self-regulation, with children mastering this through gradual cycles of progression and regression, and the need to learn and re-learn skills under new and different circumstances. Bailey et al. (2019) discussed that self-regulatory skills are based on the level of support along with sensitivity to context including obstacles in the environment. One important aspect of Bailey et al.’s (2019) research is the fact that rigid disciplinary policies have been shown to jeopardize the student-teacher relationships, with the “no excuses” approach creating high pressure on both students and the teachers. Bailey et al. (2019) showed that teachers should teach self-regulatory skills through a variety of activities and routines, and create warm, positive environments that include responsive relationships and adult modeling, along with schools providing policies/practices that offer positive and proactive behavioral supports for students.

Research has also shown the impact of the lack of self-regulation during young children’s development. Rudasill et al. (2022) discussed prior research showing that young children entering kindergarten who lack self-regulation often do not catch up and the achievement gaps tend to widen over time. Therefore, the teacher-child relationship during the preschool environment serves an important/critical function in these young children’s development and serves as the first important relationship for a child in the school environment, setting the tone for views of the class and school (Rudasill et al.,

2022). Rudasill et al. (2022) suggested that self-regulation is important in children's navigating school successfully with the teacher-child relationship serving as a foundation for children's growth of self-regulation skills. The results of Rudasill et al.'s (2022) study found that preschool children's self-regulation was predicted by the teacher-child relationship quality, higher dependency ratings predicted longer time on subtests, children closer to the teacher were less accurate in visual attention tasks, and parental ratings of children's effortful control predicted higher accuracy on visual attention tasks. These results suggest that children who have lower self-regulation abilities were more likely to be dependent on the teacher and have a lower-quality relationship.

Ceylan Esenturk and Asi's (2022) research sought to identify relationships between teachers' intentions, teacher beliefs, and self-regulation skills of children in preschool while also examining if there are similarities between children and teacher reports based on the same story stems. Ceylan Esenturk and Asi (2022) found that teachers' beliefs (i.e., the sensitivity of teachers in their interactions with children, involvement [both verbal and non-verbal], and play style of teacher) showed a correlation with preschool children's self-regulation skills; however, no significant correlation was shown while looking at teaching intentions with overlap being found between children waiting for their turn and having control over negative behavior while looking at the same story stems. Ceylan Esenturk and Asi (2022) could not find any relationship while looking at the same story stems of children including replacing thoughts, concentration, and suspending negative feelings which resulted in teachers struggling in predicting children's responses to story stems while assessing self-regulation of young children. Through prior research, Ceylan Esenturk and Asi (2022) indicated that teachers who can

identify the skills of their students accurately and use a variety of strategies to promote skills in children would be more able to engage in learning activities along with responding positively to learning environments. Effectively enhanced learning environments require teachers to know students well so that they can recognize and respond to the children appropriately through tracking improvements in children's self-regulation skills based on evidence and not personal judgments (Ceylan Esenturk & Asi, 2022). Ceylan Esenturk and Asi (2022) discussed the importance of this objectivity due to the possibility that teachers' misinterpretations can influence teachers' attitudes and behaviors, which can then harm the social adjustment of young children in their care and on, the teacher's self-regulation skills, which can further influence the children's self-regulation skills.

These studies show the significance of the relationships between the child and teacher along with the importance of teacher knowledge, beliefs, and abilities to self-regulate their own emotions. This prior research also demonstrates the importance of the teacher-child relationship while looking at young children's self-regulation abilities. The teacher-child relationship paves the way for not only children's development but also for how the children perceive their learning environment for years to come.

Biblical Foundations of the Study

Biblical Parent-child Attachment

The parent and child relationship are strongly discussed throughout the Bible in God's guidance for parents. God instructs parents to train their children in the way they should go, not provoke, or embitter their children, and discipline them (Colossian 3:21, Proverbs 22:6,13:24, *English Standard Version*, 2001). Children are instructed to honor

their father and mother, listen to their father's instructions, and follow their mother's teachings (Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 1:8, *English Standard Version*, 2001). God tells parents that children are a gift from Him, instructing them to let children come to Him and not hinder them from God. God intended for parents to meet the needs of their child/children that include love, security, belonging, and significance; providing for their emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs (Proverbs 13:24; 22:6; 23:13; Hosea 11:1-4; Ephesians 6:4, *English Standard Version*). Biblically parents take on many roles in their young child's lives that include leader, counselor, mentor, and teacher Jesus instructs his followers to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34-35, *English Standard Version*).

Throughout the Bible, there are many role models for mothers in the Bible including Mary, Sarah, and Hannah. They are all humble, recognized their children as gifts from God, and surrendered their children to God. The same is shown in the Bible for a good father. One well-known example is from the Parable of the prodigal son (*English Standard Version*, Luke 15:11-32). In this story Jesus tells about the father who gives lavishly to both of his children; one goes off to live foolishly and the other stays home resentfully. What made him a good father was not his lavish giving of money but the giving of himself lavishly; this father is humble and kind, low on judgment and great on mercy. When his wayward son returned, the father pushes away his pride and runs to his son with open arms, welcoming him back to the family, showing unconditional love, and restoring the relationship (*English Standard Version*, Luke 15:11-32). In this story Jesus tells about the father who gives lavishly to both of his children; one goes off to live foolishly and the other stays home resentfully. What makes him a good father was not his

lavish giving of money but the giving of himself lavishly; this father is humble and kind, being low on judgement and great on mercy. When his wayward son returned, the father pushes away his pride and runs to his son with open arms, welcoming him back to the family, showing unconditional love, and restoring the relationship.

God is known as the “everlasting father” in Isaiah 9:6. Through him his followers can gain a good example of what it means to be a godly parent. Jesus provides protection, guidance, teaching, preparing, modeling, correcting, loving, encouragement, and relationships. God wants a relationship with his children and wants them to continue to seek him through continuous dependence and to seek him for his presence and guidance.

Biblical Teacher-child Relationship

The teacher-child relationship is not specifically mentioned in the Bible; however, the Bible instructs that the student is not above the teacher. Romans 12:6-7 (*New American Standard Version*, 2000) states: “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us to exercise them accordingly, if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith, if service, in his serving, or he who teaches, in his teaching.” Teachers should use their gift of teaching to aid in molding children in their care the way God would want them taught, to mold and aid in their learning so they develop optimally through God’s will. God created teachers to show the way and guide others to the right path. Biblically teachers are to be with members and strengthen getting to know them by participating, teaching, fulfilling their needs, and helping them to serve others. Titus 2:7-8 (*English Standard Version*, 2000) states “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about

us.” Students in God's instruction should study and be the best they can be in their work and learning.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (*English Standard Version*, 2000) states “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which can give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This instruction is for children/students guiding them to learn and continue the path that the teacher guides them. Students should listen, read/study, and respond, learning and deliberately practicing teachings until they become an instinct. Teaching is a calling from God that creates opportunities and conditions to allow students to learn and grow. Biblically education is understood through the instruction and training of children in a way that they will not forget as they grow; directing the child to do the right things. Proverbs 23:12 (*English Standard Version*, 2000) states, “Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.”

Biblical Self-regulation

The Bible discusses self-regulation through self-control and anger, guiding Christians in 2 Timothy 1:7 (*New American Standard Version*, 2000) “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” Christians who make use of self-control discipline themselves, rule over their actions, and set boundaries; they resist temptation and resist conforming to earthly things. Children can learn self-control through the story of Nehemiah, who went back to Jerusalem to reconstruct the wall after the exodus while others came to attack. Nehemiah showed self-control by not fighting back but placing guards while the wall was rebuilt (Nehemiah 4, *New American Standard*

Bible, 2000). Through his actions, he shows self-control in a highly stressful situation by acting calmly and not attacking back.

Attachment to God is a crucial factor when looking at interpersonal conflicts. Jordan et al. (2021) examined an insecure attachment to God was significantly shown by unfriendliness through negative social exchanges and self-control. Abo-Zena and Midgette (2019) discussed the case of Ruby Bridges and how her integration into an all-white school caused her to be threatened by being killed along with the experiences she learned about Jesus. This study showed how she was able to respond in a prosocial manner to the negative crowd and regulate her emotions. Ruby Bridges was able to use examples of Jesus to draw on her behaviors to empathize and respond to negative remarks of the crowd surrounding her, to forgive and pray for them along with being able to regulate her emotions by closing her eyes and considering what Jesus would do in her situation (Abo-Zena & Midgette, 2019). Ruby was a 6-year-old child who, through her family's religious resources, learned how to imagine, recall, pray, and forgive to cope with stressful situations enacted on her by the community and school (Abo-Zena & Midgetter, 2019).

The most obvious and well-known example of the lack of self-control is Adam and Eve when they could not resist the fruit of the forbidden tree, which led us all into a world of sin (the fall). David is another example of a lack of self-control when he acts on his lust toward Bathsheba and has her husband killed (2 Samuel 11, *ESV*, 2001). Samson lacked self-control regarding women, losing his strength due to giving in to a wicked woman (Judges 16, *ESV*, 2001). Christians will be faced with anger and human emotions but are instructed to use self-control and not do things in anger. The Bible warns

Christians that they do not have self-control, but that they should seek God and do what is true, honorable, noble, and pure (Philippians 4:8, *ESV*, 2001). Self-control Biblically requires Christians to think before they act, teaching that self-control is a gift from God produced in and through us by the Holy Spirit.

Self-control in the Bible uses both actions and words. Self-control is a protective factor meant to keep the good in and the bad out, with many sins in the Bible occurring because of a lack of self-control. Through self-control, Christians can resist the sins listed in the Bible through controlling behavior. Job in the Bible is a fitting example of self-control in that he had everything taken away from him and his health suffered; however, he never blamed God. Joshua is another example of self-control when he marched around Jericho for seven days listening and obeying God; however, he never blamed God.

Through the Biblical examples of self-control Christians understand that self-control is the fruit of the spirit as discussed in Galatians 5:22-23 (*ESV*, 2001): “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Biblically Christians know that God gave us a spirit of power, love, and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7, *ESV*, 2001). Through God, all things are possible including self-control he lets nothing tempt you beyond your ability and that is not common to humankind and will provide a way out of the temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13, *ESV*, 2001). Biblically God is a source of strength for Christians in practicing self-control by providing an escape to being a source of guidance.

Summary

Through all the prior research, it is easily seen that attachments play a vital role in the development of self-regulation through a variety of relationships including parents, teachers, and God. Research indicates that a secure relationship between parent-child aids in children's self-regulation through modeling coping strategies (Pathast et al., 2021) and parental sensitivity/acceptance (Pallini et al., 2018), along with the understanding of emotions/behaviors and responses (Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022). Early childhood educator relationships have been shown to support children's social/emotional development skills (Liu et al., 2022), along with conversations to aid in young children understanding their feelings/emotions (Bailey et al., 2019). Early childhood educators also aid in teaching problem-solving skills, modeling coping strategies, and providing emotionally supportive climates (Acar et al., 2018; Blewitt et al., 2021).

Biblically, God wants all his followers to trust, honor, and obey him, relying on him for guidance. He gives instructions on how relationships should be formed and kept, along with showing the importance of self-control. Through Biblical direction, parents take on many roles in the young child's life and are to serve as a teacher for their child to learn God's guidance. Teachers in the Bible should lead others down the right path and serve as a source of direction, leaning on God for guidance in their teaching of others. Self-regulation is not mentioned in the Bible; however, self-control is shown through a variety of Biblical stories, along with showing how lack of self-control can play a role in situations throughout one's life.

Although a vast amount of research shows that parental and teacher relationships/attachments play a vital role in children's development of self-regulation, it would be beneficial to gain the parents' and teacher' perspectives on the quality of their

relationships with their children/students, as well as how they view the children's self-regulation. This information will aid in understanding if one relationship compensates for another to foster self-regulation in children, allow research to show the importance of both parental and teacher attachment in early childhood settings, and aid in therapeutic changes for young children.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Overview

This qualitative descriptive study was designed to examine the relationship between both the parent and teacher attachment/relationship with self-regulation in children 1-4 years old. The questions are discussed in this chapter, along with the selection of participants, study procedures, instruments, data analysis, and limitations of this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do parents and teachers describe the relationship/attachment with their children ages 1-4 years old?

RQ 2: How do parents and teachers describe self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old?

RQ 3: How do parents and teachers describe the impact of the parent-child and teacher-child relationship/attachment on children's development of self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old?

Research Design

This qualitative descriptive study was designed to examine the relationship between both parent attachment and teacher attachment with self-regulation in children aged 1-4 years old. Furthermore, how each relationship individually and together affects self-regulation was explored. A qualitative descriptive study fits the purpose of this research due to the study being nonexperimental and allowing the participants to share in their own words their experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the constructs being explored.

Participants

Participants included parents and teachers recruited from multiple childcare centers. Inclusion criteria included: the parent/teacher must have/work with a child between the age of 1-4 who is currently enrolled/attending the childcare center, parents/teachers must be over 18 years old, and participants had to be willing to commit to the study guidelines/timelines. Participants were excluded if their child would not be attending the childcare program, were recently enrolled, or could not commit to the timelines needed to meet the study's guidelines. The parents, teachers, and center administrators were notified of the study's purpose by a recruitment letter (Appendix A). Once parents and teachers agreed to participate, they emailed and set up a semi-structured interview (Appendix B: Parent Interview Questions) (Appendix C: Teacher Interview Questions) through phone/zoom and completed informed consent (Appendix D). A sample size of 6 parents and 5 teachers were interviewed.

Study Procedures

All potential participants were recruited from 3 to 5-star centers based in North Carolina. The star-rated system is a voluntary process where the childcare center is rated on a quality scale that assesses the health and safety standards and developmentally appropriate practices in the centers of early childhood education. A 5-star center indicates the highest quality of care. Parents, teachers, and center administrators were notified of the study through a letter sent home from the center. If they agreed to voluntarily participate, each participant emailed me to get the voluntary consent forms and was given a scheduled time for the interview process.

Instrumentation and Measurement

All research questions were generated by me as the research focused on the words and perceptions of the parents and teachers to convey the relationships/attachments and self-regulation of the child.

Teacher-Child Relationship

To assess the teacher-child relationship, teachers completed a 30-40-minute semi-structured interview. Questions focused on words and perceptions of the teacher-child relationship generated by the researcher. Secure relationships were classified when words and perceptions showed that there was good communication, care for others, autonomy, good interactions, happiness, growth, change, and self-confidence. Insecure relationships were classified when teachers described relationship elements such as misunderstanding, intolerance of difference, lack of happiness, conflict, feeling of burden, indulgence, and stagnation.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation in the school was assessed by having teachers discuss situations where a child would have to regulate emotions. Self-regulation at home was assessed by parent interviews to focus on words and perceptions of their child's self-regulation skills. Questions for self-regulation were generated by the researcher. Examples of language indicating poor self-regulation would include descriptions of a child who struggles with transitions, repeatedly uses too much force, has frequent meltdowns, has recurring social challenges, and/or has trouble with daily routines. A child who can calm down after a situation that is exciting/upsetting, refocus attention to a new task, can control impulses, and can regulate reactions to strong emotions (anger, embarrassment, frustration, excitement, etc.) would demonstrate strong self-regulation.

Parent-Child Attachment

Parents discussed attachment to their child in a semi-structured interview focusing on the parent's description of their relationship with their child. Questions for parent-child attachment were generated by the research. A child was considered a secure parent-child attachment if words and perceptions show good communication, autonomy, care of others, happiness, self-confidence, growth, change, and good interactions. An insecure attachment was shown if words and perceptions showed signs of insecurity, intolerance of difference, lack of happiness, conflict, misunderstanding, feeling of burden, indulgence, and stagnation.

Reliability/Validity

Credibility is maintained through techniques including taking as much time as needed to complete the interviews, allowing for questions participants had to be answered. Also, audio recordings were reviewed to guarantee participants' words were used. Dependability should be consistent with the use of participants that are parents/teachers of children 1-4 years old. Confirmability by using the parents/teacher's words that others would be able to present similar findings. Transferability was increased through specific research guidelines and detailed data.

Data Analysis

Once all interviews were conducted, a thematic analysis was conducted to distinguish patterns and themes in participants' perceptions/words with the goal of understanding parent-child and teacher-child relationships, as well as describing the child's self-regulation across settings. Once all interviews were conducted, the recordings were then transcribed to pull out key information. All words/perceptions that showed

good communication, care for others, autonomy, good interactions, happiness, growth, change and self-confidence were coded under secure relationships/attachments. All words/perceptions that showed misunderstanding, intolerance of difference, lack of happiness, conflict, feeling of burden, indulgence, and stagnation were coded as insecure. When looking at self-regulation at home and school, words/perceptions that included descriptions of struggles with transitions, repeatedly using too much force, frequent meltdowns, recurring social challenges, and/or having trouble with daily routines were coded as poor self-regulation. Descriptions of children who can calm down after a situation that is exciting/upsetting, refocus attention to a new task, control impulses, and regulate reactions to strong emotions (anger, embarrassment, frustration, excitement, etc.) were coded with strong self-regulation.

Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations

This study did not allow for a geographic scope of participants as it took place in 3-5 star rated early childhood centers within a 50-mile radius. Also, the centers were within a rural area, which did not allow for a vast variety of children from different socioeconomic statuses. The use of semi-structured interviews may have led to exaggerated results that are inaccurate due to embarrassment or a difference in perspectives. This study was a qualitative research study and therefore lacks quantitative research methods that could generate reliable information that is typically generalizable for larger populations in understanding of the relationships between the child and parent or teacher. Finally, the assumptions for this study included honesty and truthful responses from parents and teachers.

Summary

This qualitative descriptive study examined the teacher-child relationships, parent-child attachment, and self-regulation in children 1-4 years. Participants were recruited for this study voluntarily. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was used to distinguish words/perceptions to classify secure and insecure attachment of the parent-child and teacher-child relationships, along with self-regulation at home and school. This study was not without limitations that included generalizability, potential exaggeration of participant reports during interviews, potential impacts of the researcher's perspective during interpretation, and the lack of quantitative study data.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

This qualitative descriptive study was designed to examine the relationship between both the parent and teacher attachment/relationship with self-regulation in children 1-4 years old. Furthermore, how each relationship individually and together affects self-regulation was explored. To assess the teacher-child and parent-child relationship/attachment, teachers and parents completed a 30–40-minute semi-structured interview answering questions that focused on words and perceptions of the teacher-child or parent-child relationship. Secure relationships were classified when words/perceptions showed that there is effective communication, care for others, autonomy, good interactions, happiness, growth, change, and self-confidence. While insecure relationships are classified when words and perceptions show elements such as misunderstanding, intolerance of difference, lack of happiness, conflict, feeling of burden, indulgence, and stagnation. During the interview, parents and teachers were asked to discuss situations at school and home where the child would need to regulate their emotions. Children with strong self-regulation were classified when they could calm down after an exciting/upsetting situation, refocus attention on a task, control impulses, and regulate reactions to strong emotions. Children were classified as having poor self-regulation if they showed signs of struggles with transitions, repeatedly used too much force, had frequent meltdowns, had recurring social challenges, and/or had trouble with daily routines.

Descriptive Results

Participants consisted of six parents and the teachers of the five children. All participants were over 18 and had a child between 1-4 years old who attended a 3-5 star rated center. During interviews, notes were taken without names to determine a secure/insecure relationship/attachment and poor/strong self-regulation. Of the participants, three parents had girls and two parents had boys with two of the participants being 1 year old, one being 2 years old, one being 3 years old, and one being 4 years old. Of the parents interviewed, three interviews were with the mother only, one interview was with the father only, and one interview had both parents present with mom primarily answering questions. All teachers were females. No other demographic information was formally obtained.

Study Findings

Interviews focused on words and perceptions of the parent and teacher through the semi-structured interview; all names have been changed so participants remain confidential. The parent-child attachment was classified as secure if words and perceptions show good communication, autonomy, care of others, happiness, self-confidence, growth, change, and good interactions. Those classified as insecure consisted of words or perceptions that showed signs of insecurity, intolerance of difference, lack of happiness, conflict, misunderstanding, feeling of burden, indulgence, and stagnation. The teacher-child relationship was classified as secure and insecure by using words and perceptions under the same thematic descriptions as the parent-child relationship. Self-regulation is divided into home (through parent's words and perceptions observed in the home environment) and school (through teacher words and perceptions observed at the childcare center). Strong self-regulation is classified when words and perceptions detail a

child having the ability to calm down after a situation that is exciting/upsetting, refocus attention to a new task, control impulses, and regulate reactions to strong emotions (anger, embarrassment, frustration, excitement, etc.). Poor self-regulation is classified when the child struggles with transitions, repeatedly uses too much force, has frequent meltdowns, has recurring social challenges, and/or has trouble with daily routines. The responses for each interview question for each participant were coded to show if the child had poor self-regulation or strong, along with showing the parent-child attachment and teacher-child relationship.

How do parents and teachers describe the relationship/attachment with their children ages 1-4 years old?

Parents

Parents were asked to describe the child's relationship with them as a parent. Ruby's (1 year old) mother discussed how she is the primary disciplinarian for her, and she tends not to be her "favorite person"; however, she is the one Ruby wants when she feels bad or is ready for bed. Ruby shows signs that she turns to her mother when she feels bad or needs help; she is showing she trusts her mother, sees her as a source of comfort, and knows that her needs will be met. Ruby's mother describes her as not clingy; she wants to give "loves" and then goes on. This shows that she is not distressed by the mothers' absences, showing that she has developed a good relationship with her mother. Sara's (1 year old) father states, "she has a loving, trusting and secure relationship with each of her parents. Engaging in high energy activities with me and low energy activities with her mother." Sara prefers cuddling with her mother however, she

engages in tickling games with her father. This shows she is comfortable and secure with both parents and engages with them according to the activity.

Emily's (2 years old) parents state that they use an "authoritative parenting style with structure." They said she has a loving, caring relationship with both parents, but they try to make sure boundaries are shown while still showing love and care. Emily's parents reflect that she is learning her boundaries still, but she has a very loving and understanding relationship with them both. Using an authoritative parenting style, parents tend to have a variety of rules that children are expected to follow; however, this parenting style is characterized by an elevated level of responsiveness, showing warmth and acceptance to the child. This form of parenting has been shown to lead to secure relationships between the parent and child (Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022).

Rodney's (3 years old) mother says, "with him being my one and only child, we have a really close relationship. He loves to help me [mom] a lot around the house with anything I need help with. He is my little best friend." Through this relationship, she supports the child's need to learn about the world, develop a sense of self, and help develop an identity. This can also show social skills to the child and promote strong relationships.

Dean's (4 years old) mother expresses that she shares warmth and affection with her child, and he seeks her for comfort when he is upset. She states, "I feel he values our relationship and loves encouragement from me." Dean's mother's description of their relationship shows that he has a strong emotional bond with his mother, seeking her in times of need and knowing he can trust her when he needs something. Dean's mother

says, “he trusts me and respects boundaries, learning as we grow and giving each other the grace to change.”

All parents, when answering the question about the parent-child relationship, seemed to show that their child has a great relationship with them, and that the relationship was healthy. All the relationships appeared to be secure in nature and parents shared a warm, loving bond with their children.

Teachers

Teachers were given the chance to first talk about their class and the children's interest in their care. Teachers were then asked to describe the child's relationship with them as a teacher. Ruby's teacher describes the relationship as “nice and funny with her loving to give me hugs.” Sara's teacher says, “we are very close, and she copies everything I do.” The teacher of Emily described their relationship as “playful and loving.” Rodney's teacher says, “I am one of the only ones that he related to all the time. I have been with him a while, and we have a close relationship. I believe Rodney looks up to me as a friend and a teacher.” Dean's teacher described the relationship as “good.” He is engaged in showing her things and likes conversations with her throughout the day. These teachers appear to have a good relationship with these children, and they all seem to have some form of engagement with them. No references were made to show the children did not want to be around them or lack trust in their relationships. Most comments described love, hugs, playfulness, and engaging relationships. The children seem to enjoy their time with the teachers and no responses show that the relationships are strained or not secure.

How do parents and teachers describe self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old?

Parents

Parents were asked to describe their child's mood throughout their day. Ruby's mom describes her as "not a morning person"; however, if her routine is upset, she will get upset. Ruby is described as a child who "does better in quiet spaces, loves reading and bath time, but will get irritable if hungry or tired." Ruby, judging by her mother's comments, is a child who thrives on routines but is also highly upset if things shift out of the normal.

Sara's father describes her "as an overall very happy child, though she will occasionally express frustration with boundaries and display anger or sadness, especially when she is tired before nap or bedtime." Analyzing what dad says, Sara appears to have emotions like a typical child and during high stress times, like when tired or when things are not going her way. Emily's parents state she is "generally cranky when she wakes up, moody on Mondays, happy with routines, and generally happy." Through the details about Emily's mood, she tends to express her emotions typically for a young child. Rodney's mother states, "his mood is typically happy; it is very rare he is in a bad mood." Dean's mother describes him as "fairly even tempered for a greater part of the day unless his needs are going unmet or aggravated by a friend or brother. He then becomes flustered." These children, being generally happy but still having moments of emotion, show that they can have good emotional regulation and generally do not have trouble controlling and expressing emotions.

Parents were then asked to describe daily interactions throughout the day with their child. Ruby's mother says she thrives on routine: "if you upset her routine, she will get upset but will calm herself back down; she does not like change." The father of Sara

discusses her days to be consistently the same from waking up, to helping care for pets, attending childcare, running errands after school, helping prepare dinner, and ending the day with bath time. Sara's father says, "She picks several books to read while cuddling before bed." Emily's parents discuss how during certain interactions throughout the day she is pretty laid back: "She is still learning to express emotions, so I am teaching words and helping her figure out emotions." Rodney's mother says daily interactions "are sometimes a struggle. He does not like bedtime or getting up in the morning. He is typically good during meals." Dean's mother says that often "We keep quiet in the mornings till everyone has a chance to wake up on their own. At this time, I'm often sluggish or we are all engaged in quiet activities. as we move more into breakfast and lunch there is plenty of chatter and directions. Some expressions are tired and annoyed, but also cheerful and expressive." Dean's mother says he is open to help from her and that he loves it when she praises him or something he has done. These comments show that these children thrive on consistency and comfort, which are factors important to developing a secure parent-child attachment.

Next, the parents were asked to describe transitions throughout the child's day. Ruby's mother says she manages routine transitions very well; however, if it is out of her typical routine, she needs time to adjust, and even though she is not great verbally, she is good at communicating her needs. Ruby's mother says, "If you upset her routine she will be upset; she does not like change but will calm herself back down." Sara's father said, "it depends on what is going on for activities." They try to incorporate active play and learning into daily tasks, and "dependent on what the next task is, we try to allow proper time to transition from one to the next." Sara's father says, "transitions that we have

found difficult include going from play to preparing for bed, so we made songs to help with those transitions and approach them with patience.” Her father also says that when she is focused, they often use a countdown to help with the transition. Emily’s parents say she transitions well, but transitions are sometimes harder when it is an activity she does not want to transition to, for example, bath time. Emily’s mother says that she transitions well for most activities, “struggling in tasks like bedtime and potty time, that most children do not want to do; however, she calms herself down pretty quickly.”

Rodney’s mother states, “He manages transitions well; bedtime and morning routines are sometimes a struggle.” Rodney’s mother states, “He transitions well except for bedtime and morning routines.” Dean’s mother says, “He is relaxed and easy going. He transitions well throughout his regular routine. On occasions there may be a meltdown.” Dean’s mother says during transitions sometimes there is “not much fuss” while “at times he will flap on the floor and cry with big emotions because he is still learning to understand.” All the children seem to be well adjusted and transition well throughout their day. These transitions may indicate that the parent has formed a secure relationship with the child and the child is learning to self-regulate their own emotions. Secure attachments aid in nurturing the child, reinforcing that the parent is a source of help/comfort (Paley & Hajal, 2022). The child gains an understanding that if they need assurance, they will have support, which makes transitions easier on the child. The child being able to transition smoothly shows the child can self-regulate their emotions. These children seek their parents for assistance in a transition that is hard, and this shows that the parents have a secure attachment to their children. This also shows that most of the children can regulate their emotions well because the parents state they can calm

themselves down. One child becomes whiny and may cry, but this is in response to a need from the parent.

Parents were asked to describe how their child interacts with other children/adults. Ruby's mother describes her as wanting "sole attention" and that "she is a fearless, feisty, free-spirited person who wants to go and do." She further states, "Ruby will look for about 10 minutes if she is unsure about someone, taking a mental picture and processing, then she will be fine...she has to warm-up." Sara's father describes her interactions as "somewhat odd," saying, "some days she is shy and will not want to interact with others, then other times she jumps right into the mix." He has "noticed that once she becomes comfortable with adults and kids, she interacts with them easy; she wants to be involved in play or activities, will start games with other kids or try to talk with adults." Emily's parents say she "loves adults and engages well with other children; she has an autistic older cousin she does great with." The mother of Rodney describes his interactions with adults and children to be "very respectful and friendly." Dean's mother describes his interactions as "friendly and playful," saying, "he is great at icebreaking when kids are being shy to initiate playtime together." Dean's mother also describes that he is "comfortable introducing himself to almost any adult and typically has positive interactions." While some of these children need time to adjust to unfamiliar faces, these children all typically have positive interactions with both adults and other children. These interactions show that they can adjust to their surroundings, are comfortable with others and can regulate their emotions.

Finally, parents were asked to describe how the child acts during times of high emotions. Ruby's mother says, "she has gotten better. She is very dramatic but when

upset does not last long, and she tries to express emotions.” Her mother further states, “I do not feed into it and Ruby often feeds off the emotions of others for certain things.”

Sara’s father says, “with her being young she has trouble with high emotions, but with time she will learn to manage them. Right now, she has high emotions and will start to cry and sit down, on occasion throws a temper tantrum, but that is a rare occasion.”

Parents to Emily said, “managing times of high emotions is still a work in progress. We stop and react, being gentle but not too gentle.” Rodney’s mother says, “He is at the age where he is very whiny and throws tantrums when he does not get his way. Rodney will eventually calm down, and I will then talk to him and help him understand why.” Dean’s mother says, “Whew, high emotion times can be intense and sometimes over seemingly simple issues.” Dean’s mother states, “I have had conversations with teachers about how he will have crying outbursts when he is not called on, but they are collectively working to change this.” Most of these children show signs that they can self-regulate their emotions with additional support. Some take longer than others, and all parents discuss how they aid in helping their children understand the reasons behind why they did not get what they wanted or why it occurred. Children’s age can play a huge role in how long it takes for them to regulate their emotions, but most of these children seem to have limited serious meltdowns and seem through conversations to be able to adjust back to typical activities.

Teachers

Teachers took part in the study to share their interactions with the child and their opinion of the child’s ability to regulate emotions. The teachers were asked to describe the child’s mood throughout their day at school with them. Ruby’s teacher described her

mood as “playful and outgoing, remaining this way consistently throughout her day.” Sara’s teacher says, “She is very happy, with little crying, but mainly if she gets hurt or another child takes something from her.” The teacher of Emily said, “She is helpful, hands on with morning routines, eats all her meals, naps really good, and plays great throughout her day.” Rodney’s teacher said, “He is very smart. Some days with little sleep, he can be really challenging, stubborn. His moods are usually pretty good.” Dean’s moods are described as “fluctuating throughout the day depending on if it was going his way. Overall, he is pleasant.” The teachers all described the children as being in good moods and playful.

Teachers were next asked to describe the children’s daily interactions throughout the day. Ruby’s teacher says, “Mornings are playful and [she] understands when things throughout the day are occurring.” Sara’s teacher said, “She knows the daily routine and has no issues with other children in the classroom, does not like when things are taken from her, but does not mind side-by-side play.” Emily’s teacher said, “She loves to help them throughout the day, she doesn’t have issues with interactions with other children, but tends to want her personal space.” Rodney’s teacher described his interactions as “being a leader; children follow him. He knows what to do and expect out of his day. Naptime is a challenge, but he loves playtime (sometimes he will share, sometimes he will not). He at times thinks everything is his, but he can be a very loving little boy.” Dean’s teacher says, “he would sometimes play with other kids but majority of the times he would play by himself and seldomly interact with other people.” Most of these teachers described these children as not typically having issues with interactions other than the typical young child not wanting to share. This shows that these children are

comfortable in the classroom environment with their interactions with the students and teacher. However, some responses showed that there were issues with self-regulation during times of stress or transitions needing additional support.

The teachers were asked to share about the child's transitions through the child's day in the classroom setting. Dean's teacher says that the biggest transitions for him are meals, naptime, and outdoor play. Ruby's teacher says that transitions vary throughout the day and occur regularly from different activities throughout the day (morning drop off, breakfast, bathrooms, story time, art, outdoor play, lunch, nap, snack, free center play, outdoor play, and pickup). Sara's teacher said their transitions consist of, "they arrive, free playtime until breakfast, then outdoor play, circle time, lunch, naptime, snack, and then outside time until pick up if the weather permits." Emily's teacher says, "They have the same activities daily, and it is typically at the same time daily; they consist of free play, breakfast, circle time, art, outside time, lunch, naptime, snack, free play, and then outdoor play and pickup." Rodney's teacher says, "they have a variety of transitions throughout the day, but most consist of transitioning from indoor to outdoor, or from play to feeding times, and then home."

The teachers were asked to share how the child manages these transition times. Dean's teacher said, "He typically was good with transitions for meals and bedtimes; he transitions smoothly/easy. He follows directions well and with little redirection or fuss." This shows that he is comfortable in his classroom setting and is aware of what typically takes place throughout his day. He does not have times of stress in the classroom and is well regulated on things that occur throughout his day. Ruby's teacher said, "She has very easy transitions during changing activities, but does need some help when

transitioning from each place/activity.” Although she says she needs help, the teacher does not report any serious issues or meltdowns during transition times, and this shows that the child can regulate herself from one activity to another. Sara’s teacher says, “Although some assistance at times is needed in transitioning from outdoors to indoors, she transitions very well.” This shows she can regulate her emotions and move from one activity to another with little help. Emily’s teacher said, “She transitions great. She is ready to move from [one] activity to the next and looks forward to the changes throughout her day.” This shows that Emily can regulate her emotions throughout her day and needs little help. Rodney’s teacher said, “He transitions well throughout the day for the most part; nap time is his hardest transition, and that is because he does not want to stay still and rest.” This shows that he can self-regulate. Although naptime is a challenge, the teacher says, “After redirection and a few bathroom trips, he will settle down.”

Next, teachers were asked how the child interacts with other children/adults. Dean’s teacher said, “He typically plays by himself and seldom has interactions with other children... interactions with other adults goes smoothly as long as he knows and likes the adult; he typically is talkative and has pleasant interactions.” This is an age-appropriate reaction for his age. Interactions for him with adults he knows are talked about in a positive manner, showing that he does not have any issues with interacting with those he knows. Ruby’s teacher says that she is “playful and likes to run around with the other children. With other adults Ruby knows she is affectionate/loving but she must know them.” Ruby does not have any issues having conversations with other children or adults. Sara’s teacher says, “She loves to give hugs and play with her friends. With adults she is very loving and attention seeking.” Emily’s teacher describes her interactions as

“playful, loving.” Rodney’s teacher described that he “plays and acts well with other children.” When talking about teachers, she described his interactions with them as “a challenge and [he] will push them to their stress limit. He often does not listen to them and will roll his eyes at others.”

Teachers were asked to describe how the child acts during times of high emotions. Dean’s teacher said, “during times of high stress, he would throw tantrums and fits when he would not get his way or he would act really stubborn, although he would eventually get his emotions together.” The teacher of Ruby said, “She does not have hard times with high emotions; she just walks away.” Sara’s teacher said, “She is very calm and at times of high emotions it does not take her long to calm back down and follow instructions.” The teacher of Emily said, “In times of high emotions she wants to be held and not disturbed.” Rodney’s teacher said, “In times of high emotions he acts off the chain and does not like to listen to anyone, needing constant redirection.” Most of these children, according to teacher feedback, appear to be able to regulate their emotions even though some need more help than others. It appears that these children know they can depend on their teachers for guidance and to help to regulate their high emotions. According to his teacher, Rodney does appear to need more support and redirection, which could show that he struggles more during these times than other children.

How do parents and teachers describe the impact of the parent-child and teacher-child relationship/attachment on children’s development of self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old?

Parents

Parents were asked their thoughts about their own relationship with their child and the child's ability to regulate emotions. Ruby's mom says, "I think we have a good relationship. She understands boundaries, if I start to count, she understands that she needs to adjust." Sara's father says he grew up fast and emotions were used against him, but with a lot of challenging work, he has learned to let her express her emotions and then they talk about them and find a solution. Sara's father states, "feelings are important, but I am trying to show her there are healthy ways to express them." Emily's parents say, "The relationship is still a work in progress. She is still learning to express her emotions, so we do a lot of teaching words while not reacting to her emotions before we stop and think about how to help her through the situation." Rodney's mother says, "I am stern but understanding with my son, always letting him know what is right and wrong, with him being understanding." Dean's mother says, "I feel like I am constantly having to find new ways to help him regulate because of our own very different perspective on what is so important to us." All these parents discuss the fact that they are a part of helping their children through conversations learn what is right and wrong, but they also allow them the time they need to self-regulate themselves. These parents discuss that they talk with their children and help their children find ways to self-regulate.

Finally, parents were asked to share their opinion of the relationship between their child and his or her teacher(s). Ruby's mother said, "It is much better than to start. She is in a better space with them both now and the teachers both understand her ticks, so she now has less days that are bad." Sara's father said, "I feel having a relationship between the child and teacher is important for a child to succeed in life. It takes a village with

everyone on the same page. I try to ask the teachers each day how she did and give them a heads up if she is having a bad day at drop off. If everyone works together, I feel the child can succeed in development.” Emily’s parents said, “She loves her teachers.” Rodney’s mother had no comment on the relationship between her child and the teacher. Dean’s mother says, “He is comfortable to express his big emotions with his teacher, I feel the relationship is good because he feels comfortable to express these high emotions.” All parents except one felt that the relationship between their child and teacher was positive but also important for them.

Teachers

Finally, the teachers were asked their thoughts about their relationship with the child and the child’s ability to regulate emotions. Dean’s teacher said, “I think we have a great relationship; I love him like he is my own child. He would take a while to regulate his emotions, but after he would be okay.” Ruby’s teacher said, “I feel our relationship is great. She regulates her emotions okay at times; she just needs a little more support.” Sara’s teacher said, “I think our relationship is perfect, and we are very close. She is calm most times and appears to regulate her emotions well.” The teacher to Emily said, “My relationship with her is great, happy, and loving. She regulates emotions well, just needs extra hugs and attention.” Rodney’s teacher said, “Our relationship is good. He likes quick hugs and to be on the move. He is very smart and learns quickly. He just needs a lot of redirections at times, but he can regulate his emotions.” All the teachers appear to have a good relationship with the students and believe that the children all can regulate their emotions.

Evidence of Quality

After all interviews had been completed, they were reviewed and transcribed for accuracy, changing only names to protect confidentiality. The transcripts are included in Appendix E.

Summary

Participants included six parents and the teachers to the child. They completed a 30–40-minute interview to assess their relationships with the child and the child's emotion regulation. Notes were taken without names to assess the interviews to determine a secure/insecure relationship/attachment and poor/strong self-regulation.

Interview data suggested that all the parents appeared to have a secure relationship with their child. The teachers of these children also all appeared to have a secure relationship with these children. These relationships were classified as secure through examining words/perceptions through the interview that showed that there is effective communication, care for others, autonomy, good interactions, happiness, growth, change, and self-confidence. When looking at self-regulation, most children seemed to have strong self-regulation by managing emotions and times of high stress in the home and school environments. There were some instances where Dean and Rodney required more help and would appear to have some struggles with self-regulation.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

This qualitative descriptive study explored parent and teacher perspectives on parent-child and teacher-child attachment/relationships. This study also examined parent/teacher perspectives on the relationships between the parent and teacher attachment/relationships with self-regulation in children 1-4 years old. Through this chapter findings will be detailed and discussed along with limitations and all recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The first research question explored how parents and teachers describe their relationship/attachment with the children. Through the interviews with parents, all described the attachment between them and their child as secure. They all appeared to have a good relationship with their child, and during times of high emotions, the child appeared to rely on them for support. The teachers described their relationships as good, that the child cared for others, or that the child showed affection. The relationships that the teachers described all appeared to describe secure relationships.

The second research question explored how parents and teachers describe children's self-regulation. The parents all described times when the child would have strong emotions, and they all described times and ways in which the child would seek them for support. Parents described several positive interactions with their children, such as reading stories or having conversations with their child. The parents mainly described the children as having good self-regulation, although one reports certain times of high struggles during which the child would need more assistance with self-regulation.

Through their interviews, parents mentioned times when the child struggled with high emotions or regulating them, but most pointed out that the child seemed to adjust quickly.

While looking at the school environment and self-regulation, most teachers seemed to say that although there were times of high emotions and stress, the children would self-regulate. One child, Rodney, seemed to struggle more with regulation at times, but the teacher did comment that he would get back on track.

Finally, the third research question explored the potential impact of the parent-child/teacher-child relationship on the child's self-regulation. Through the interview process, parents and teachers both commented on how the children lean on them for support during transitions or times they need additional support. Dean's mother stated that the interaction between the teacher and her son shows he is comfortable in her presence, which points to the significance of the relationship between the teacher and child in allowing him to express his emotions. Sara's father states, "I feel having a relationship between the child and their teacher is important. For a child to succeed in life it takes a village and everyone on the same page. I try to ask the teachers each day how she did and give the teachers a heads up if she is having a bad day when dropped off. When everyone works together, I feel a child can succeed more development." These comments show that parents have strong opinions on the teacher-child relationship and its impact on development. Study results suggest that both parents and teachers understand they have a strong impact on the young children in their lives.

Discussion of Findings

Prior research by Hajal and Paley (2022) showed that self-regulation involves an individual's ability to regulate his/her emotions, with early childhood being a key time in

development for children to move away from being highly dependent to being able to control their emotions without strong support of a caregiver. Parents and teachers at times described the children needing additional support, but also being able to readjust after a high emotions situation and return to what they should be doing. Booth et al. (2019) pointed to transitions in the classroom environment engaging children's self-regulation through teacher directed activities and moving from various activities throughout the day. Ruby's teacher in her interview commented that "she needs help transitioning from one place to another but transitions easy." This pointed to Booth et al.'s (2019) prior research that teachers guide children's self-regulation through teaching them schedules and supporting them in times when they need guidance on where they should be next. Sara's teacher commented that the "biggest transition is walking to the playground and coming back in along with naptime from lunch." These times point to huge transition for children when they must go from one activity, they enjoy to something they may not look forward to as much. Teachers through the interview process have all stated they help children through transitions from high activity times to more settled times. All the teachers stated that children at times needed additional support but after being shown slowly started to transition easier throughout their days and weeks.

Perry et al. (2018) examined parental behaviors and showed that they play a vital role in young children's self-regulation through sensitive parenting, which includes meeting the child's needs at times of high emotional stress, along with supporting/responding to the child's failed attempts at self-regulation in a supportive manner. Through parental interviews, Ruby's mom supports this prior research in that she counts with Ruby in times of high stress. She stated, "I support her in times of high stress,

however not in times of tantrums.” Sara’s father also shows support for her during high stress times by helping wind down to transition from one activity to the next; he says, “we try to transition slowly from play to sitting on the couch to read a book to slow her down.” The parents interviewed all stated ways they support their child in high times of stress, through cool down activities to counting, to help the children regulate their emotions. Both current and prior research show support for parents aiding children through their emotions to help foster self-regulation. Modeling self-regulation strategies aids children in handling high stress emotions and helps them foster self-regulation. These results back prior research findings on both parents and teachers fostering children’s self-regulation. Schultheis et al.’s (2019) research supported the early parent and teacher relationships with children to aid in molding children’s understanding of emotions along with aiding in the understanding/gaining of strategies to cope with high stress situations. All participants in the study showed they are supportive of the children in their lives and support them in times of high stress or when additional support is needed.

Through parental attachment of young children, development and self-regulation research has shown that children learn how to express their emotions through their observations of their primary attachment figures. Pallini et al.’s (2018) research showed the importance of secure attachment relationships with regulatory functions in children’s behavior, emotions, and social cognition, with research pointing to children with secure attachments scoring higher in effortful self-regulation. Through this study, all participants showed a secure relationship with their child, and most of the children showed signs of strong self-regulation while two children showed signs that they needed more assistance

in regulating which would point to poorer self-regulation skills. Parents described their interactions with their child as good and their child as being over all happy. Sara's father states, "we have a loving trusting, and secure relationship," while Emily's parents stated, "we have an authoritative parenting style that involves structure and lots of love and support." Carreras et al. (2019) described sensitive parenting as being aware of their child's emotions, being able to respond to them, and responding appropriately. The parents in the current study have shown that they are aware of their child's emotions and respond to them when they need additional support; however, they also provided the children with the opportunity to regulate their emotions on their own before intervening. Through prior research and this study, it is shown that secure parent-child attachments are needed for emotion and self-regulation to be learned; these relationships aid in children learning about emotions and teach regulatory functions. Through these secure relationships, children learn how to respond to high stress times along with having support. Perry et al.'s (2019) prior research showed that stepping in before a child can try to problem-solve can hinder a child's ability to learn self-regulation. Kok et al.'s (2022) study showed that maternal sensitivity and supportive discipline were important for determining children's self-regulation. The parents through the interview process all state ways in which they redirect or allow the child to calm down on their own before they step in to assist the child. This is shown through prior research to foster self-regulation and strengthen the parent-child attachment. The child gains an understanding that the parent is there for support but allows the child time to problem-solve and learn in the situation.

Early childhood educators have been included in recent research along with the importance of their support on children's social and emotional development (Blewitt et

al., 2021). Blewitt et al.'s (2021) research showed the teacher-child relationship is critical in children's development through responsive nurturing and conversations that aid in children's understanding of emotions/feelings. This allows children to see teachers' regulation strategies and guide children in learning problem solving strategies. The current study results suggest that teachers help children through transition times and when high stress emotions arise; they guide children on ways to redirect their emotions. Malek-Lasater et al.'s (2022) research showed teachers support the healthy development of children during mealtimes, teaching practices, behavioral support, and responsive interactions. All interviews in this study discussed times when teachers supported children through transitions to mealtimes, from one center to another, or when they struggled when playing with other children. The NAEYC noted that high-quality teaching practices guide teachers to function as role models when using problem-solving skills, behaviors, and attitudes when instructing young children (Acar et al., 2018). Through the interview process, all teachers describe how they interact with the children, guiding them to solve problems or understand what should be happening or what they should be doing. The teachers all discussed the maintenance of the schedule and staying on tasks, which aids in children knowing what is expected of them throughout the daily transitions. Teachers discuss the group times in their day and transition times. Karuppiah (2021) suggested that during smaller groups, teachers could provide more positive support. Bailey et al.'s (2019) research showed that self-regulatory skills are based on the level of support along with sensitivity to context including obstacles in the environment. Through the interview with teachers, this study showed that the classroom environment guides opportunities for children to practice self-regulation skills through transitions and

learning to play with others. This finding supports the importance of the early education years as a central context for developing and practicing self-regulation with the support of teachers and peers through modeling. During the interviews, all teachers discussed their relationship with the children as secure and fostering a warm, welcoming environment for learning.

Parenting and teaching behaviors through the interview process show that they vary in responding to the child during high stress with one parent ignoring the tantrum or counting down (Ruby), one parent teaching to use words (Emily), and one parent letting the child express the emotions then talk through them to find a solution (Sara). In contrast, the teachers' responses indicated that they tend to let the child calm down on their own or support them in transitioning by picking them up and moving them to the next transition area. Both parents and teachers discuss communication as a strong factor in the child's day. With both stating that routine and consistency is important in the children's making smooth transitions. Throughout the interview process, teachers gave details to show that they are engaged in conversations and interactions with the children for a substantial portion of the day, which may suggest that both relationships would need to be secure for the child to develop strong self-regulation. This study lacks participants with an insecure attachment and would need further research to support this finding.

Biblically, God instructs parents to train their children in how they should go, not provoking or embittering them, and to discipline them (Colossian 3:21, Proverbs 22:6, 13:24, *English Standard Version*, 2001), while children are instructed to honor their father and mother, listen to their father's instructions, and follow their mother's teachings (Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 1:8, *English Standard Version*, 2001). Through the interview

process, all parents discussed ways in which they allowed their child to regulate but would also step in to direct them (discipline) them if the situation escalated. The families in this study all have a secure relationship where the child is instructed to listen to the adult and follow rules.

Biblically, the teacher should use her/his gift given by God (Romans 12:6-7, *English Standard Version*, 2001) and should be a model of good works; in teaching showing integrity, dignity, and sound speech (Titus 2:7-8, *English Standard Version*, 2001). The teachers, through the interview process, all discuss how they structure their classroom/learning environment to fit the needs of the children in their care. They all discuss showing affection to the children in their care, giving hugs and guidance when the children need extra attention. Biblically, these teachers are using their gifts to form loving relationships with the children in their care and aiding them to develop to the best of their ability.

Biblically, self-regulation was discussed through self-control and anger. Christians who make use of self-control discipline themselves, rule over their actions, and set boundaries, resisting temptation and earthly things (1 Corinthians 9:27, *English Standard Version*, 2001). In childhood, this is still a learning process, but the children use the adults within their lives to learn these self-control skills. Through the interview process, the adults in these children's lives (parents and teachers) serve as positive role models for these children and aid in these children fostering these biblical skills. Biblically, self-control teaches Christians to think before they react and is known as a gift from God. Through the development of self-regulation, children develop the skills needed to gain greater self-control.

Implications

Theoretical foundations of this study were discussed through attachment theory and bioecological theory. Prior research on attachment supports the importance of parent-child attachment and teacher-child relationships in developing young children's social and emotional skills including self-regulation. This study supports the finding that both relationships impact the children's coping abilities within their environment while providing the view from both the parent and teacher. Children who have secure relationships with those primary caregivers in their lives can turn to those caregivers in time of need and use them to model appropriate behaviors. This research shows that parents and teachers can both be key in children learning and adjusting during high stress times. This finding can help provide resources to parents and teachers and show the importance of working together to help children learn self-regulation skills. This research can also be applied to parenting classes and teaching classes to show the importance of forming secure attachment relationships in young children's lives, as well as what skills parents and teachers have used to foster self-regulation skills in young children. Although prior research has shown this connection individually, this study shows both aspects of the parents' and teachers' perspectives.

Bioecological theory is based on the interactional processes between children and others in the microsystem. Through this study, it is easily shown that children's interactions with both parents, teachers, and others within the microsystem foster their self-regulation abilities by modeling how to handle emotions. The current study shows the importance of these relationships, how to foster better relationships, and what skills are currently being used with positive results in both the home and the school

environment. Through these results, this study can pave the way for future qualitative research and provide information on the importance of both relationships in children's self-regulation.

Finally, this research can aid in both resources for both parents and teachers on fostering attachments and promoting self-regulation in young children, along with providing information for curriculum changes to aid in self-regulation through problem-solving skills, communication, and expression of feelings/emotions. This information may provide teachers with a greater standard of care, which can help teachers to understand and focus on additional support for children through modeling to improve self-regulation.

Limitations

This study did not allow for a geographic scope of participants since it took place in 3-5 star rated early childhood centers within a 50-mile radius. All centers were within a rural area, which did not allow for a vast variety of children from different socioeconomic statuses. This study relied on semi-structured interviews that may have led to exaggerated results that are inaccurate due to embarrassment or a difference of perspective. This study was a qualitative research study and therefore lacks the quantitative research methods that could generate reliable information that is typically generalizable for larger populations in understanding the relationships between the child and parent or teacher. Finally, the participants in this study represented a fairly homogenous group in terms of self-regulation and attachment, limiting the conclusions that could be drawn compared to a participant group with varying levels of attachment and self-regulation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research would benefit from quantitative research involving a larger population. This could generate reliable information in understanding the relationships between the child and parent or teacher along with providing a greater understanding of self-regulation abilities. Future research would benefit from using other sources besides star-rated centers to gain a greater understanding of the teacher-child relationship and self-regulation. Future studies would also benefit from a larger participant scope and allow for more geographic participants.

Summary

The qualitative study showed that all the parental attachments and teacher relationships discussed by participants were secure. Most of the self-regulation in the home and in classroom was shown to be strong through semi-structured interviews focusing on the words and perceptions of both parents and teachers. Prior research and theories to support this study included attachment theory, bioecological theory, and Biblical foundations. The current study and past research show that secure relationships help foster young children's ability to self-regulate.

Through this research, limitations included geographic limitations, the use of limited centers through star rating, and a homogenous sample; however, these limitations help pave the way for future studies to gain a greater understanding by expanding the populations being studied. This study can be used to enhance teacher training, parental classes, and curriculum for young children to foster secure relationships and teach the importance of modeling self-regulation to young children.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Parents, Teachers, and Administrators,

My name is Elaina Arnold, I am a Doctoral student at Liberty University in the school of behavioral science. For my dissertation, I am conducting a qualitative descriptive study designed to examine the relationship between both the parent and teacher attachment/relationship with self-regulation in children 1-4 years old.

I am writing to let you know about the opportunity to participate in a research study about parent-child and teacher-child attachment and its influence on young children's self-regulation. This study will use semi-structured interviews. The interview should require approximately 30-40 minutes per participant and all personal information will remain confidential.

I am sending this letter to all-star-rated centers within the community with a star rating of three or higher. If willing to participate, please email me at

██████████ You can also opt out at any time through the same contact information. I will provide you with a date and time once all consent forms have been signed. If you would like additional information on this study, please contact Elaina Arnold at ██████████ or at ██████████ you can also opt out at anytime through the same contact information.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study and for those willing to participate.

Sincerely,

Elaina Arnold

APPENDIX B: Parent Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your child. What are his/her interests?
2. Describe your child's relationship with you as a parent.
3. Describe your child's mood throughout their day.
4. Describe daily interactions throughout the day (morning routines, meals, bedtime, play, etc.)
5. Describe transitions throughout the child's day.
6. How does your child handle transition times?
7. Describe how your child interacts with other children/adults.
8. Describe how your child acts during times of high emotions.
9. What are your thoughts about your relationship with your child and the child's ability to regulate emotions.
10. What is your opinion as a parent of the relationship between your child and their teacher?

APPENDIX C: Teacher Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your class. What are the children's interests?
2. Describe the child's relationship with you as a teacher.
3. Describe the child's mood throughout their day.
4. Describe the child's daily interactions throughout the day (morning routines, meals, bedtime, play, etc.)
5. Describe transitions throughout the child's day.
6. How does the child handle transition times?
7. Describe how the child interacts with other children/adults.
8. Describe how the child acts during times of high emotions.
9. What are your thoughts about your relationship with the child and the child's ability to regulate emotions.

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORMS

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled “The Influence of Parent-Child Attachment and Teacher-Child Relationships on the Development of Children’s Self-Regulation.” I will describe this study to you and answer any questions. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. Rolen, School of Behavioral Science at Liberty University.

What the study is about

This research examines the relationship between the parent and teacher attachment to the child with self-regulation in children ages 1-4 years old.

What I will ask you to do

I will ask you to sign consent forms to participate in the study. I will also ask that you commit to an approximately 30-40 minutes semi-structured interview. If any questions or concerns arise, reach out to me, and allow 24 hours for a response, please.

Risks and discomforts

I do not anticipate any risks/discomforts from participating in this research.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits.

Incentives for participation

Participants will not receive incentives/compensation for being in this study.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security

All participants will be given a date and time for the interview, no identifying information will be placed on notes taken during the semi-structured interview. Consent forms will be stored separately from survey data and the two will not be connected.

Physical data/research files will remain filed and only be provided to the researcher,

Faculty Advisor, IRB (Institutional Review Board), or faculty needed to review documentation for research purposes. Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through email could be read through a third party. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. I cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

Sharing De-identified Data Collection in this Research

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science and health. I will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information I share. Despite these measures, I cannot guarantee the anonymity of your data.

Future use of Identifiable Data

Identifiers might be removed, and the de-identified information used for future research without additional consent.

Taking part is voluntary

Participants' involvement is voluntary. The participant may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make him/her feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to him/her, and can choose not to participate if they are uncomfortable with these conditions.

If you have questions

Please ask any questions you may have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact Elaina Arnold at [REDACTED]. Participants will be given a copy of this consent form.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Participants Signature

Date

Signature of the person obtaining consent

Date

Date

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPTS

Sara father interview:

1. Sara loves new experiences, learning, and helping around the house. She loves reading books, singing songs, and investigating how things work.
2. Sara has a loving, trusting, and secure relationship with each of her parents. She prefers to engage in high energy activities with me such as chase games and tickling. With her mother, she prefers low energy activities such as cuddling, reading, and singing songs.
3. Sara is an overall happy child, though she will occasionally express frustration with boundaries and display anger or sadness, especially when she is tired before her nap or bedtime.
4. In the mornings, Sara wakes up between 6 and 7. One of us will open her bedroom door, and she will come downstairs for a diaper change, clothes and breakfast. She then helps to care for the pets and attends daycare four to five times a week. After pickup, we occasionally run errands and Sara loves to help with tasks such as putting items into a basket or carrying a bag. At home, she is invited to help prepare dinner by washing produce with the aid of a step stool/tower and helping to clean up after meals. Active play and learning are incorporated into daily tasks. We sing made-up songs to help with transitions such as Jammie-time and getting clean. Her bedtime routine consists of a diaper change and pajamas, then continues to bathing and dental care. She then picks several books to read while cuddling before bed.

5. Transitions throughout Sara's day depend on what is going on for activities. Usually, we try to have them transition smoothly. If we are playing, we try to wind down play and transition to doing tasks for lunch or supper. We try to transition smoothly from play to sitting on the couch to read a book to help her slow down knowing her bedtime is coming up. Depending on what the next task is we try to allow proper time to transition from one to the next.
6. Transitions that we have found difficult include going from play to prepping for bed, so we made songs to help with those transitions and approach them with patience. When Sara is focused on a task, we often supply a countdown such as One more book before bed. Last book, then bedtime.
7. Sara is somewhat odd with interaction with other kids and adults can be mixed. Some days she is shy and will not interact with them and other times she jumps right into the mix. The only consistency I have noticed is that once she becomes comfortable with adults or kids, she interacts with them easily. She wants to be involved in play or activities, will start games with other kids or try to talk with adults.
8. Sara being young, she has trouble with high emotions at this age. As time goes and she becomes older she will learn how to handle them. Right now, when she has high emotions, she will start to cry and sit down. If they are running high, she may even throw a temper tantrum, thankfully these are rare occasions yet.
9. This question is tricky and complicated. I grew up in a troubled family where I had to grow up fast and emotions are used against you. This is why I have a hard time dealing with my own emotions or showing any for that matter. With a lot of

hard work, I have learned that when Sara is having emotions, I let her express them and we try to talk through them and find a solution. If she is having a high emotion day, I give her a minute to let it out before we try and resolve what emotions she is having. I let her have emotions and in no way do I let my own faults impact her feelings. Feeling is important, but I am trying to show her there are healthy ways to express them.

10. I feel having a relationship between the child and their teacher is important. For a child to succeed in life it takes a village and everyone on the same page. I try to ask the teacher each day how she did and give the teachers a heads up if she is having a bad day when dropped off. When everyone works together, I feel a child can succeed more development.

Sara teacher interview:

1. We are just getting our room together and structured in a good routine. We currently have art two times a week, circle time after outside time, and free time the rest of the day between diapers, naps, and meals. The children's interest are the love for nursery rhymes, music, and reading books.
2. Me and Sara are very close, and she copies everything I do.
3. Sara is very happy with little crying, but mainly if she gets hurt or another child takes a toy from her.
4. Sara moves easily through transitions with little to no help needed. She will seek comfort if she gets hurt or a friend takes something from her. She knows the daily routine and has no issues with other children in the classroom, does not like when things are taken from her, but does not mind side-by-side play.

5. They arrive, free playtime until breakfast, then outdoor play, lunch, nap, snack, free play, and then outdoor play and pickup. The biggest transition she has is walking from the playground and coming back in and naptime from lunch. Sara for the most part transitions with little to no help.
6. Although some assistance at times is needed in transitioning from outdoors to indoors, she transitions very well.
7. She loves to give hugs and play with her friends. With adults she is very loving and attention seeking.
8. She is very calm and at times of high emotions it does not take her long to calm back down and follow instructions.
9. I think our relationship is perfect, and we are very close. She is calm most times and appears to regulate her emotions well.

Emily's parents' interview:

1. Emily is a very active little girl. I was interested in this study since I took psychology as a minor in school.
2. We use an authoritative parenting style with structure. She has a loving, caring relationship with us both, but we try to make sure boundaries are shown while still showing love and care.
3. Emily is generally cranky when she wakes up, moody on Mondays, happy with routines, and generally happy. She tends to express her emotions typically for a kid her age.
4. She is pretty laid back during interactions.

5. We feel she transitions well for the most part, but transitions are sometimes harder when it is an activity that she is not wanting to transition to, for example bathtime.
6. She transitions well for most activities. She struggles in tasks like bedtime and potty time, that most children do not want to do; however, she calms herself down pretty quickly.
7. She loves adults and engages well with other children. She has an autistic older cousin she does great with.
8. She is still learning to express emotions, so we are teaching words and helping her figure out emotions.
9. Oh managing times of high emotions is still a work in progress. We stop and react being gentle but not too gentle.
10. She loves her teachers

Emily's teachers interview:

1. A little about our class is we like to have fun and learn new things through the day. They are interested in blocks and colors and toys that make noise.
2. Emily is playful and loving with me.
3. Emily's mood throughout the day is happy, outgoing, and funny.
4. Emily is helpful, hands on with morning routine, eats all meals, naps really good, and plays great throughout her day.
5. She moves quickly and fast throughout the day. She loves to help me throughout the day, she doesn't have issues with interactions with other children, but tends to want her personal space.

6. She handles transitions great. She is ready to move from activity to the next and looks forward to the changes throughout the day. We have the same activities daily, and it is typically the same time daily; they consist of free play, breakfast, circle time, art, outside time, lunch, naptime, snack, free play, and then outdoor play and pickup.
7. Emily's interactions with others is playful and loving.
8. During times of high emotions she wants to be held and not disturbed.
9. My relationship with Emily is great, happy, and loving. She regulates emotions well, just needs extra hugs and attention.

Ruby's mother interview:

1. She is a sassy, loving little girl who is active and shy until she gets to know you. She is interesting, fearless, and wants to go, go, go. She is a lot like dad.
2. I am the primary disciplinary for her so I tend to not be her favorite person. I am the one she wants when she feels bad or needs help. Her sister is her favorite person. She is not clingy she loves and wants to go on.
3. She is not a morning person. She is up between 8:30 or 9. She wants milk and a snack and to watch shows and play by lunch she wants to eat and then lay down because she has worn herself out. She goes to sleep by herself. She does better in quiet places. If her routine is upset she will get upset. She loves to reading and bath time, but will get irritable if hungry or tired. She is good at communicating needs just not verbally.
4. She thrives on routines. If you upset her routine, she will get upset but will calm back down, she does not like change.

5. She manages routine transitions very well however if it is out of her typical routine, she needs time to adjust, even though she is not great verbally, she is good at communicating her needs.
6. If you upset her routine she will be upset, she does not like change but will calm herself back down. She wants sole attention.
7. She wants sole attention. She is a fearless, feisty, free-spirited person who wants to go and do. Ruby will look for about 10 minutes if she is unsure about someone, taking a mental picture and processing, then she will be fine. She has to warm up.
8. During high emotions she has gotten better. She is very dramatic when upset but it does not last long. She tries to express emotions. I do not feed into it. Ruby feed off the emotions of others and other things.
9. I think we have a good relationship. She understands boundaries if I start to count she understands that she needs to adjust.
10. It is much better than to start. She is in a better space with them now and the teachers both understand her ticks, so now she has less days that are bad.

Ruby's teacher interview:

1. Our class likes to have fun and learn new things. We love ducks, blocks, and books.
2. She is nice and funny to me and loves to give me hugs.
3. Playful and outgoing, remaining this way consistently throughout her day.
4. Mornings are playful and she understands when things throughout the day are occurring.

5. Transitions vary throughout the day and occur regularly from different activities throughout the day (morning drop off, breakfast, bathrooms, story time, art, outdoor play, lunch, nap, snack, free center play, outdoor play, and pickup).
6. She has very easy transitions during changing activities but does need some help when transitioning from each place/activity.
7. She is playful and likes to run around with the other children. With other adults she knows she is affectionate and loving but she must know them.
8. She does not have hard times with high emotions she just walks away.
9. I feel our relationship is great. She regulates her emotions okay at times she needs a little more support.

Rodney's mother interview:

1. Rodney is a very intelligent child. He is a bubbly and happy child. He likes to play and watch TV and eat. His interests are dinosaurs, cars, and anything dealing with fire trucks, police cars, and excavators. Excavators excite him.
2. With him being my one and only child, we have a really close relationship. He loves to help me a lot around the house with anything I need help with. He's my little best friend.
3. His mood throughout the day is typically happy, it's very rare when he is in a bad mood.
4. Daily interactions are sometimes a struggle, he does not like bedtime. He typically does good during meals. Its a struggle getting him up in the morning also.
5. Transitions are good I have no problem with transitions besides bedtime and morning routines.

6. He handles transitions well, bedtime and the morning routines are a struggle.
7. He interacts with other children and adults well. He is very respectful and friendly. He plays really well by himself or with others.
8. He is at the age where he's very whiny and he throws tantrums when he does not get his way. He will eventually calm down and I will talk to him and help him understand why he could not get what he wanted.
9. I'm stern but understanding with my child. I always let him know what's wrong and right and what's okay and what's not okay. He is very understanding.
10. I think the relationship between my child and his teachers are okay.

Rodney's teacher interview:

1. My class is busy and full of students. I am working to get a schedule that fits all children's needs
2. I'm one of the only one that Rodney relates to all the time. I've been with him a while now we have a close relationship, I believe Rodney looks up to me as a friend and teacher.
3. Rodney is very smart, some days if he didn't get enough sleep the night before, he can really be challenging, stubborn. His mood is usually pretty good.
4. Rodney reacts to daily routines well he knows what to expect daily. We play, change diapers, etc. In the morning before breakfast. Like all kids he can or will not share. Rodney does well with his meals and snacks, but if he throws his food away first all the kids will follow. He is a leader. Naptime is challenging to get him to sleep. Playtime he likes all kids, shares sometimes, and will not sometimes. He thinks everything is his, but he can be a loving little boy.

5. Rodney transitions throughout the day well for the most part.
6. Rodney handles transition times well. He gets over his feelings fast.
7. Rodney plays and acts well with other kids, when there is another teacher to help or assist, he gives them a challenge and will push you to the stress limit, some days he does not listen at all, rolls his eyes, continues doing what he is doing, look through the teacher and will not listen.
8. Rodney acts off the chain during high emotion he does not listen at all we have to talk to him.
9. I really think the child is tired because he can't sit down quietly, he has to be on the move at all times. Me and Rodney has a good teacher/child relationship he can do well. He is a very smart boy and learns fast. He knows no stranger. He does well with transitions for the most part.

Dean's mother's interview:

1. Big emotions can be exhausting for me because I was raised unable to express any type of emotion. I have learned to change as I go to make sure they're comfortable expressing themselves in a respectful manner. Dean is a soft emotional soul. He taught me how to move through changes with better grace. However, Dean tends to still have very large feelings he expresses loudly and openly. Never violent or aggressively.
2. I keep firm boundaries with Dean. If I say no, do not ask again. Our parent child relationship is full of learning and teachable moments, and I like to confidently think that I have created comfortability for him to express himself honestly. I do not punish for telling the truth. We apologize to each other for our outburst and

show respect to each other as well. He trusts me and respects boundaries we learn as we go and give each other the grace to change.

3. Dean can be fairly even tempered for a greater part of the day, unless needs are going unmet (hungry) his brother or friend is aggravating him or he has become flustered with a toy. Not being able to figure out how a toy works really gets the greatest reaction out of him as far as negative reactions go. He can be very loving and affectionate with random hugs or words.
4. Our mornings start similar throughout the week, school or no school. We keep quiet in the mornings till everyone has a chance to wake on their own. At this time I'm often sluggish or we are all engaged in quiet activities. As we move into breakfast and lunch there is plenty of chatter and directions. Some expressions are tired and annoyed. But also, cheerful and expressive. Naps sometimes come with complaints but never anything too disagreeable. I keep to a schedule, so they transition easier throughout the day.
5. As stated, I keep to a schedule so the daily tasks we do don't come with much fuss. On occasion there may be a meltdown because we are turning off the tv to go to bed or he has to sit down tablets for a task. I noticed Dean had a difficult time when it came to putting tablets away, so I severely limited time on those. He does better now that it isn't an often thing. I have been strict with schedules and expectations with behaviors when putting away tablets.
6. Not much fuss when it comes to our daily tasks. Most often tasks are transitioned between without issues. On occasion Dean will flop in the floor and cry with his big emotions he is still learning to understand.

7. Dean is usually friendly and playful. He is a great icebreaker when kids are being shy to initiate playtime together. He is also very comfortable introducing himself to almost any adult. I joke with adults at the store after he has given them his full name that he would probably share his social if he knew it.
8. When high emotion times for Dean can be intense, sometimes over seemingly simple issues. His teacher and I just communicate how he will have crying outbursts when he isn't called on. It's down to every other day but is something we all work towards changing. Part of me is happy that the worst experiences for him is not being called on at school or he has to turn the tv off.
9. I feel like I am constantly having to find new ways to help him regulate because of our very different perspectives on what is so important to us. His worst experience could be something so trivial to me and I have to step back to check my perspective and then go forward. I feel as if we have a trusting relationship that he feels comfortable enough to express his extreme emotions as well as his softer emotions. With that comfort zone along with boundaries his ability to regulate himself still greatly varies. Most of the time he has a pretty good grasp on it without intervention.
10. Dean is capable of expressing his big emotions (outburst) with his teachers. This makes me feel as if he is absolutely comfortable with her. He feels safe to do so.

Dean's teacher interview:

1. Our class is well-structured. His interests include building blocks and magnets.
2. Our relationship is good. He is engaged in showing me things and likes conversations with me throughout the day.

3. His moods fluctuate throughout the day depending on if it is going his way.

Overall, he is pleasant. When he would do something that got him in trouble he really did not like the consequences that followed.

4. He sometimes plays with other kids but the majority of time he will play by himself.

5. He typically does good with mealtimes and bedtimes. If he did not like anything on his plate he will typically cry and whine. I tell him to try it but he will not. The biggest transitions for him are meals, naptime, and outdoor play.

6. Transitions are pretty smooth and easy. He follows directions well and with little redirection or fuss.

7. He typically plays by himself and seldom has interactions with other children. Interactions with other adults goes smoothly as long as he knows and likes the adult; he typically is talkative and has pleasant interactions.

8. During times of high stress, he will throw tantrums and fits when he would not get his way or he would act really stubborn, although he would eventually get his emotions together.

9. I think we have a great relationship; I love him like he is my own child. He will take a while to regulate his emotions but after he would be okay.

