

## Classroom Management Strategies as a Cornerstone of Elementary Teachers' Self Efficacy

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### ABSTRACT

In this study the local school district has historically had a lack of professional development (PD) in classroom management, challenging student behaviors in many classrooms are on the rise which is resulting in decreased teacher self-efficacy. The main purpose of this quantitative, correlational study, which was influenced by a constructivist theoretical framework, was to examine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy in the classroom while addressing challenging student behaviors and the quantity of PD that the teachers have had in classroom management. The convenience sample contained 99 teachers from 8 elementary schools; this total was based upon a response rate of 45%.

The instrument, the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), was administered via SurveyMonkey-®. Although the Pearson product-moment correlation showed that PD in classroom management and teachers' self-efficacy were not significantly related, the descriptive TSES results indicated that teachers needed specific guidance in addressing challenging students, as evidenced by the lowest score on the TSES for the question asking teachers how well they are able to educate the most difficult students. Instead of planning another series of broad PD sessions for teachers, a behavior management manual was designed to simultaneously help teachers manage challenging student behaviors and increase their self-efficacy in the classroom when addressing challenging student behaviors. The goal is to provide teachers with a manual that they can reference to find resources to address challenging student behaviors and allow them to focus on academic achievement. This behavior management manual for teachers has implications for positive social change in that it can educate teachers on how to manage challenging student behaviors and potentially improve academic performance.

Keywords: classroom management, teacher self-efficacy, professional development, behavior management strategies

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers in many elementary classrooms in the local school district are struggling with students who have exhibiting challenging behavioral issues. This large urban district has approximately 27,000 students from a very diverse student population, a large percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students who are second language learners. Teachers are struggling with extreme amounts of stress as they try daily to manage difficult student behaviors (Anderson, 2012). They can feel defeated by disruptive students (Rappaport & Minahan, 2012), and teachers have frequently commented that such challenging students can also drain energy from the rest of the class (Anderson, 2012). New teachers have cited the lack of support from administration and parents with behavior management as the reason for leaving the profession (Boyd, 2012). Large numbers of classroom teachers have been confronted with difficult student behaviors that have impeded their capacity to teach in dynamic, safe environments (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011). Simultaneously, high-stakes testing and increased importance on research-based instruction have placed increased demands on teachers' resources and time (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

Teachers have voiced concerns about not having the lack of tools and training to deal with difficult students and having to spend a large portion of instructional minutes attempting to deal with such behaviors (Boyd, 2012). Although ongoing professional development (PD) is prevalent in all states, only 27% of teachers who have participated in PD in behavior management have found it helpful (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). PD has two main challenges: One is ensuring that the teachers' time is well spent in meaningful training, and the other is whether teachers can transfer what they have been taught to their classroom practices for positive results (Mathur, Estes, & Johns, 2012).

Mahon, Bryant, Brown, and Kim (2010) described classroom management as one of the most vital skill sets that teachers should acquire and one that is consequently the most challenging to attain. Every school system is in need of teachers who have a deeper level of understanding of the ways in which classroom management strategies affect student achievement (Mahon et al., 2010). Challenging student behaviors are affecting schools across the country and preventing teachers from teaching and students from learning (Cassidy, Lower, Kintner, & Hestenes, 2009). The only manner in which many students can focus and learn in school today is by blocking out these disruptive behaviors (Borgonovi & Jakubowski, 2011). However, this task is particularly difficult for students with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) and other special needs.

The researchers conducted this study to evaluate teacher efficacy when dealing with challenging student behaviors. This school district is struggling to address the problem of challenging student behaviors, which can negatively impact the entire student body. Teachers are spending a large amount of time dealing with negative behaviors rather than focusing on student achievement (Etheridge, 2010). The most common practice when dealing with disruptive students is to send them to the office with an office referral. They are either placed in another classroom for the day or are sent home. In both options, the students are losing valuable instructional time in their own classrooms, and the behaviors are not being addressed in meaningful ways

## Purpose of the Study

This study was necessary as challenging behaviors are occurring in classrooms at high rates nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). The rationale behind this study was to examine teachers' self-efficacy in the local school district in relation to the PD that the teachers have received in classroom management. The researchers developed the project (see Appendix A) based upon the findings. Challenging behaviors in the school setting are a universal dilemma not only for teachers but also for other students. This issue is intensified when teachers lack the training to deal with these behaviors (Webster-Stratton, Reinke, Herman, & Newcomer, 2011).

Although interventions for students with challenging behaviors can reduce or possibly eliminate problem behaviors, research on this topic from the perspectives of classroom teachers has been scarce (Webster-Stratton et al., 2011). Even though teachers have attended workshops addressing specific behavior management strategies and techniques to deal with challenging students' behaviors, these specific teachers have not been using these strategies consistently and have tended to return to old habits that have proven unsuccessful (Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009). Teachers who are lacking in behavior management strategies are more likely to write office referrals for inappropriate student behaviors rather than deal with student misbehaviors in the classroom (Rogers, 2009). The referrals can overburden the administration with unnecessary tasks when they should be focusing on student achievement and instructional leadership.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this quantitative study was to look for a relationship between teachers' self-efficacy in the classroom when dealing with challenging student behaviors, instructional strategies, and student engagement and the amount of PD that teachers have had in these areas. Three research questions (RQs) guided the study:

1. What is the relationship among teachers' PD scores, the number of PD workshops pertaining to classroom management attended during the last 5 years, and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies, as measured by the TSES?

$H_{01}$ : There is no relationship between teachers' PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies, as measured by the TSES.

$H_{a1}$ : There is a relationship between teachers' PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies, as measured by the TSES.

2. What is the relationship among teachers' PD scores, the number of PD workshops pertaining to instructional strategies attended during the last 5 years, and their perceived self-efficacy in instructional strategies, as measured by the TSES?

$H_{02}$ : There is no relationship between teachers' PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in instructional strategies, as measured by the TSES.

$H_{a2}$ : There is a relationship between teachers' PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in instructional strategies, as measured by the TSES.

3. What is the relationship among teachers' PD scores, the number of PD workshops pertaining to engagement strategies attended during the last 5 years, and their perceived self-efficacy in engagement strategies, as measured by the TSES?

*H<sub>03</sub>*: There is no relationship between teachers' PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in engagement strategies, as measured by the TSES.

*H<sub>a3</sub>*: There is a relationship between teachers' PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in engagement strategies, as measured by the TSES.

The main goal of this study was to determine whether the teachers perceived that they were receiving adequate PD in the field to assist with classroom management and whether there was a relationship between the amount of PD on classroom management and the teachers' self-efficacy in regard to behavior management. Examining whether there was a difference in the amount of PD that the teachers were receiving in other areas such as student engagement and instructional strategies and whether the amount affected their perceived self-efficacy in those domains was also completed. The purpose of this study was to examine the self-efficacy of a sample of teachers in the local school district in relation to the PD received in classroom management. The project was based and developed upon the findings. The literature review includes information about the theoretical background of behavior management, teachers' efficacy beliefs, and the implications for the project study.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

The research design for this study was correlational and followed quantitative methods. According to Creswell (2012), a characteristic of quantitative research is, "the emphasis on the procedures of comparing groups or relating factors about individuals or groups in experiments, correlational studies, and surveys" (p. 41). A correlational research method is a statistical measure of a relationship between two or more variables (Creswell, 2012). In this form of research, a researcher identifies one or more variables and an outcome, or criterion variable (Creswell, 2009). The variables in this study were self-efficacy in classroom management, instructional strategies, and engagement strategies, and the PD that the teachers received on these topics. The criterion variable was PD. I conducted a survey to see whether there was a relationship between the PD that the teachers received on behavior management, instructional strategies, and engagement strategies, and their perceived self-efficacy in those areas. The focus of this study was to measure whether there was a relationship between the number of PD workshops that the teachers have attended in classroom management and their self-efficacy when dealing with behavior management. The rationale for adding the other two variables was to allow me to see whether there was a significant difference in the amount of training that the teachers received in the areas of student engagement and instructional strategies and whether or not this training, if extant, impacted their self-efficacy.

This correlational research involved quantifying the specific relationship between two or more variables, namely, PD workshops in classroom management, engagement strategies, instructional strategies, and teachers' self-efficacy. A survey design using a questionnaire with convenience sampling achieved this goal successfully. The researchers considered other research designs, such as qualitative research interviewing the teachers, before determining that quantitative research would be the most effective approach. Qualitative research would not allow

me to obtain the statistical data needed to determine whether a PD module would be warranted according to the teachers' perceptions.

### **Setting and Sample**

A survey link from SurveyMonkey® to all teachers of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 from eight elementary schools in the local school district was sent. The link first addressed consent from the participants; each one was able to indicate implied consent before taking the survey. This study was conducted using convenience sampling. A convenience sample holds participants because they are prepared to join the study and the surveys are available when needed (Creswell, 2012). Convenience sampling occurs when the groups are prearranged because of the structure of the organization, which then makes it convenient to collect the data.

A GPower analysis was used to obtain the sample size for this correlational study, which showed the total sample size required in order to obtain a power of 0.9 and alpha of 0.05, which was 92 participants (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996).

Even though randomization might have been more desirable (Creswell, 2012), the researcher selected a convenience sample from eight elementary schools from the local district. The schools were visited to explain the study before sending out the e-mail link. All of the elementary teachers from the eight schools were the target population, and all teachers who participated comprised the sample (Creswell, 2012). All teachers in the eight schools with district e-mail accounts had access to the survey. This criterion excluded part-time teachers. The response rate was 45%, with 99 of 220 teachers responding. Teachers from the eight elementary schools in the local school district were surveyed to obtain their perceived level of self-efficacy applicable to classroom management, instructional strategies, and engagement strategies in classroom management, efficacy in student engagement, and efficacy in instructional strategies. This survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey.

Gravetter and Wallnau (2005) explained that “although samples are generally representative of their population, a sample is not expected to give a perfectly accurate picture of the whole population” (p. 6). Fink (2006) described the general guideline with response rates on surveys as the higher, the better. Fink explained that a sample comprises participants who are representative of the whole target population. Standard error in this study was reduced through the sampling of a large group of teachers from the target population. These larger sample sizes produce results that are more accurate (Fink, 2006; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005).

### **Instrumentation and Materials**

The TSES is a 24-item questionnaire that is rated using a 9-point Likert scale. The TSES contains three subsets of scores: efficacy in instructional strategies, efficacy in classroom engagement, and efficacy in classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). According to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007), previous research has established that reliability ranges from .92 to .95 for the overall instrument. In a comparison with other teacher efficacy instruments, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) found the TSES showed positive correlations and as a result, has construct validity. Raw data will be available by request from the researcher. Permission was obtained (see Appendix B) to use this instrument (see Appendix C).

The values 2, 4, 6, and 8 allow the respondents to choose in-between values for these descriptions. Efficacy of student engagement is measured using Questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, and 22 (e.g., Question 1: How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?), and efficacy of instructional strategies is measured using eight questions: 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24 (e.g., Question 7: How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?). To calculate scores, the scores for a subset were summed and then divided by the number of questions in that subset. Each subset has eight questions.

The researcher used a cross-sectional survey design, meaning that the surveys were distributed to, “the participants at a particular point in time in order to gather their perceptions around a specific issue” (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 226). To measure the teachers’ PD scores, I added a cover page to the TSES with a few short questions pertaining to 31 personal demographics and, more importantly, what PD the teachers had received in the last year that had focused on classroom management. The scores were determined on how many PD workshops the teachers had attended that had focused on behavior management. The demographic questions asked the participants how many years they had been teaching, gender, age, and educational level. The next set of questions asked how many behavior management PD trainings the teachers had attended in the last 5 years and how many hours they had attended particular workshops. Those two numbers were summed and divided by two for the PD scores. The teachers were also asked how many PD training sessions they had attended in the last 5 years that had focused on student engagement or instructional strategies.

## RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between the amount of PD that the teachers has received in the areas of student engagement, instructional strategies, and behavior management and the teachers’ sense of self-efficacy in those areas. The TSES (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was sent via SurveyMonkey to 220 teachers in eight schools in my local school district. Ninety-nine responses, a response rate of 45% were received.

Questions 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24, resulted in a score of 6.99 ( $7.26 + 7.18 + 6.95 + 6.77 + 7.01 + 7.18 + 6.66 + 6.91/8$ ). The efficacy scores of behavior strategies, as measured using Questions 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24, resulted in a score of 7.04 ( $6.85 + 7.91 + 7.77 + 7.39 + 6.43 + 7.28 + 6.39 + 6.32/8$ ). To calculate scores, the scores for a subset were summed and then divided by 8. Table 1 shows data relevant to their teaching experience.

### Descriptive Analysis

In Part 1 of the survey, the teachers were asked demographic questions about gender, grade level, years of experience, and number of conferences attended pertaining to the three areas that I studied. Eighty-five (84.69%) participants were women, and 15 (15.31%) were men. With regard to the subscales in the TSES, the results showed that the efficacy scores of student engagement, as measured using Questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, and 22 in the TSES, resulted in scores of 6.32 ( $5.68 + 6.39 + 5.99 + 6.93 + 6.87 + 6.24 + 6.24 + 6.70 + 6.30/8$ ). The efficacy of instructional strategies, as measured using Questions 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24, resulted in a score of 6.99 ( $7.26 + 7.18 + 6.95 + 6.77 + 7.01 + 7.18 + 6.66 + 6.91/8$ ). The efficacy scores of

behavior strategies, as measured using Questions 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24, resulted in a score of 7.04 (6.85 + 7.91 + 7.77 + 7.39 + 6.43 + 7.28 + 6.39 + 6.32/8). To calculate scores, the scores for a subset were summed and then divided by 8. Table 1 shows data relevant to their teaching experience.

Table One  
No of Years of Teaching Experience

Demographic question on experience	No. of years teaching			
How long have you been teaching?	0-5 yrs	5-10 yrs	10-20 yrs	20+ yrs
Percentage of years teaching	19.19%	15.15%	34.34%	31.31
Rounded averages	19	15	34	31
No. of teachers	19	15	34	31

*Note.* The majority of teachers had been teaching 10 to 20 years. (N = 99)

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the number of PD sessions on classroom management attended over the last 5 years. Thirty-four of the teachers had not attended a single training session.

*Descriptive Statistics for No. of PD Sessions Attended on Classroom Management*

Demographic question on classroom management	0	1	2	3	4	5 classroom management
No. of PD sessions attended on	0	1	2	3	4	5 classroom management
No. of teachers (%)	33 (26%)	15 (13%)	21 (21%)	19 (18%)	2 (2%)	19 (19%)

*Note.* N = 99

Tables 3, 4, and 5 show descriptive statistics for opportunities to attend PD, the number of PD sessions attended on engagement strategies, and whether the sessions were provided by the school district. Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for opportunities to attend PD and whether the sessions were provided by the school district.

Table 3  
*No. of PD Sessions Attended Provided by School District*

PD sessions provided by district	Answer		
Were the PD opportunities/workshops/conferences provided by the school district?	Yes	No	Some
No. of teachers (%)	52.53%	4.04%	43.43%
Outcome	52	4	43

*Note.* Participants stated that over 50% of the trainings had been provided by district. (N = 99)

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for opportunities to attend PD, the number of PD sessions attended on engagement strategies, and whether the sessions were provided by the school district.

Table 4  
*No. of PD Sessions Attended on Engagement Strategies*

Question	Answer					
PD attended focusing on engagement						
No. of teachers (%)	0	1	2	3	4	5 strategies
Outcome	8.08%	17.1%	18.18%	16.16%	10.10%	30.30%
	8	17	18	16	10	30

*Note.* When asked how many PDs they had attended in the last 5 years that focused on engagement strategies, the majority of teachers, 30%, had attended more than five trainings. (*N* = 99)

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for opportunities to attend PD and whether the sessions were provided by the school district.

Table 5  
*No. of PD Sessions on Engagement Strategies Provided by School District*

Question	Answer		
Were the PD on engagement strategies provided by the school district?	Yes	No	Some
Percentage of teachers	52.53%	4.04%	43.43%
Outcome	52	4	43

*Note.* Participants stated that over 56% of training sessions had been provided by district. (*N* = 99)

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

Survey data was entered into SPSS. Three separate correlations using the Pearson product-correlation coefficient. For RQ1, I was investigating whether there was a relationship between the amount of PD in the area of behavior management and the level of self-efficacy in regard to managing student behaviors.

#### Research Question 1

What is the relationship among teachers’ PD scores, the number of PD workshops pertaining to classroom management attended during the last 5 years, and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies, as measured by the TSES?

*H*<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between teachers’ PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies, as measured by the TSES.

*H*<sub>a1</sub>: There is a relationship between teachers’ PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies, as measured by the TSES. The teachers’ PD scores and their perceived self-efficacy in classroom management strategies were not associated. The correlation between PD in classroom management and self- efficacy scores was  $r = -.66, p = .517$  (see Table 6). No significance was found; therefore, the test accepted Null Hypothesis 1 and rejected Alternative Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1.



Table 6  
*Pearson Correlations for Self-Efficacy in Classroom Management*

Variable	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	r
Behavior management	.517	99	-0.66

Figure 1 is a scatterplot showing the relationship between the teachers’ self-efficacy scores in behavior management and the number of workshops attended in behavior management. The scatterplot shows no relationship between self-efficacy scores and the number of workshops attended.

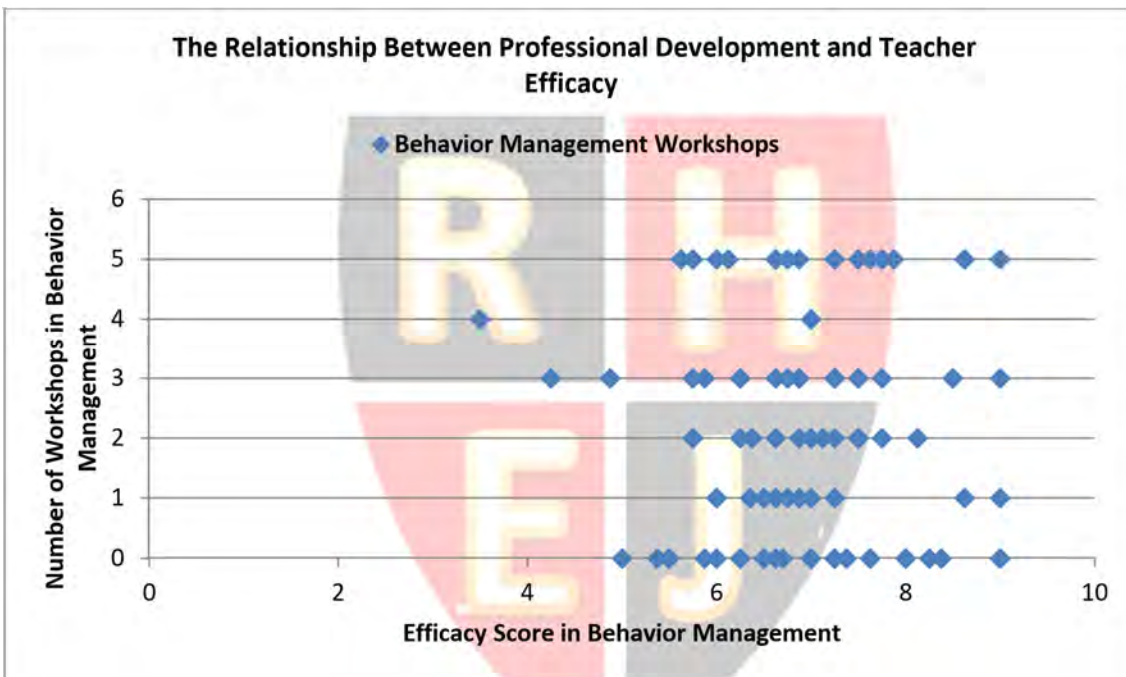


Figure 1. Scatterplot of relationship between self-efficacy scores and number of workshops attended on behavior management.

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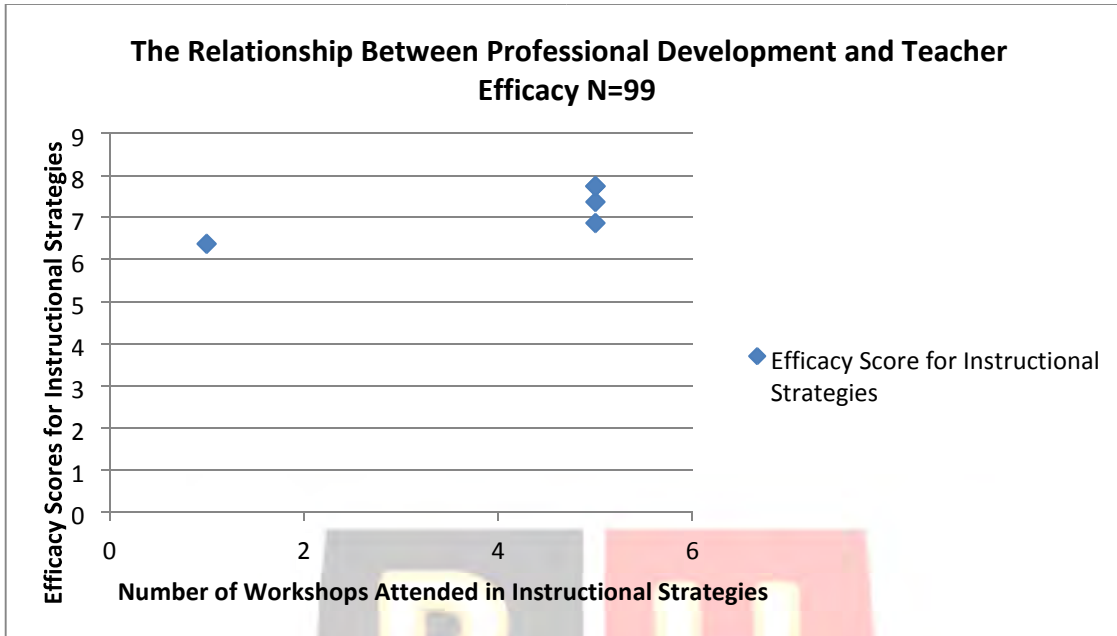
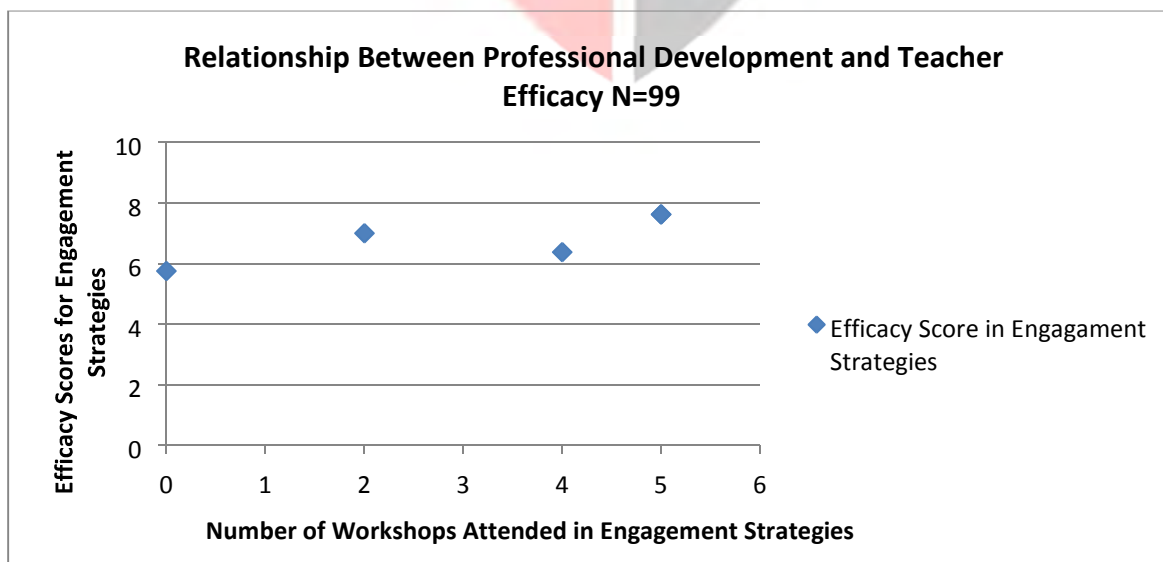


Figure 2. Scatterplot of relationship between self-efficacy scores and number of workshops attended in instructional strategies.

Research Question 3

For RQ3, a relationship between the amount of PD received in engagement strategies and the teachers’ levels of self-efficacy in regards to engaging students in their classrooms was looked at. No relationship between these two variables was found. Is there a relationship among teachers’ PD scores, the number of PD workshops pertaining to engagement strategies attended during the last 5 years and their perceived self-efficacy in engagement strategies, as measured by the TSES?



*Figure 3.* Scatterplot of relationship between self-efficacy scores and number of workshops attended in engagement strategies.

### **Summary of the Results**

Analysis of the data showed that of the three RQs, none of the relationships between the variables were significant. RQ1 looked at whether there was a relationship between the amount of PD that teachers received in behavior management and their level of self-efficacy in the area of behavior management. RQ2 and RQ3 looked at whether there was a relationship between teachers' PD scores and the number of PD workshops pertaining to instructional strategies attended during the last 5 years, and their perceived self-efficacy in instructional strategies or engagement strategies, as measured by the TSES.

Analysis of the data showed high self-efficacy scores in classroom management. One reason could have been that the teachers who were struggling the most did not take the survey or did not rate themselves objectively. A number of teachers are unaware of the extent of the behavior management issues in their classrooms until such issues are fully brought to their attention. An example is teachers sending challenging students to the office or another classroom when they are being disruptive as a long-term solution. Those teachers need to meet with disruptive students and their parents to come up with a plan of action to keep them in the classroom learning crucial academic content.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In contrast to the amount of PD that the teachers had received in engagement and instructional strategies, the teachers who were surveyed had attended only one PD in behavior management in the last 5 years. More PD or some type of other resources should be made available to teachers as they work with challenging students. Teachers need readily available resources to help them to make decisions about the behaviors of challenging students. Teachers also need to be able to access ideas about behavior management quickly and easily.

The results of the data analysis resulted in the development of a manual that teachers can use to help meet classroom strategies and management needs that will help to address different types of behaviors. The development of the handbook for teachers will save them and their school districts time and money, as well as increase the likelihood to incorporate new ideas.

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