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The Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Towards the Impact of Covid-19 on Student Outcomes

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THE ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

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By

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Globally, the coronavirus (COVID-19) has significantly impacted special education teachers and educational institutions. The onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020 led to an almost complete closure of school buildings, triggering a significant disruption to K -12 education across the United States (Education Week, 2020). The quick transition to online and remote learning presented one of the biggest obstacles, especially for special education teachers. The routine and social connections essential for the development of special education students were disturbed by the closing of the schools. Teachers had to develop innovative ways to keep students interested and connected, which could have led to skill regression and decreased sociability. Special education teachers had to make significant adjustments to lesson planning, communication with parents, and providing their mandated Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Through the unknown expectations of a pandemic on education, teachers still faced balancing their professional responsibilities with personal commitments and

challenges of caring for family members, managing their health concerns, and adapting to their new daily routines.

This study examines special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. The student outcomes concern academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism. The researcher developed and used the Dixon Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding Student Outcomes (DASETSO) instrument to collect data. Secondary data analysis was collected to determine if there was a difference in general education teachers' attitudes.

Keywords: *absenteeism, academic achievement, COVID-19, individual education plan (IEP), special education teachers, social behaviors, socioemotional development, students with disabilities (SWD's),*

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DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank you for being my Cornerstone. I would not be where I am without you. Your steadfast love, grace, and wisdom are the cornerstones of my existence. Your Word has always given me courage and consolation. I could not do this without the Holy Spirit dwelling within me.

I dedicate this dissertation to my three children, Jordyn, Jabari, and Joi Dixon. In the time it took me to complete this degree, you have been my inspiration, providing unwavering support and love. Your presence has been a constant source of motivation, reminding me of the importance of perseverance and determination in pursuing my goals. This achievement is not just mine but ours, as it symbolizes our collective effort and sacrifices as a family. As I embark on this new chapter in my career, I carry with me the invaluable lessons of resilience and strength that you have taught me. Thank you for being my inspiration and my greatest blessing. We did it!

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, Howard and Willie Marie Washington. As the core of this family, you have continuously poured love and motivation into whatever dream I dared to pursue. When I told you I wanted to attend college, you were my primary support system. Even after completing my bachelor's and master's degrees, you continue to remain constant, serving as a guiding force in my academic journey. Your belief in my potential has not wavered, inspiring me to pursue further education and strive for excellence. To be the first college graduate in the family is a significant milestone that carries profound meaning and significance.

Rest In Peace, Grandpa Howard

I dedicate this dissertation to the wonderful parents God gave me. Darrin and Arlean Moore, thank you for your unconditional love and support. You have been by my side since 2017, through every trial and tribulation, uplifting and guiding me when I most needed it. I am deeply grateful for your unconditional love and acceptance of me and my children, embracing us as we are with open arms. From the depths of our hearts, we cherish and love you immensely.

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To my committee member, Dr. Marshal Dupas, I sincerely appreciate your knowledge and expertise about educational systems and processes. Your dedication to student growth in all capacities to education executes a drive to move forward and strive for greatness.

To my committee team (Dr. Jacqueline Smith, Dr. Reginald Todd, and Dr. Shannon Verrett), as I reflect on this journey, most words fall short of expressing my gratitude for your commitment and presence in supporting student growth and progress. Your presence has been instrumental in completing my journey. Your words and emotional support have sustained me during some very challenging moments. I hope to be able to pay it forward to another student going through the doctoral journey. To my community, I appreciate all the times your kind words have uplifted my spirits through this journey. It has been a tough journey, and you have continued to encourage me along the way. You were always a phone call away. Words cannot express my gratitude for your support in this process.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) had a momentous effect on the lives of millions across the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a sharp decline in global mortality rates and posed an unparalleled threat to food production, public health, and the workforce. (WHO (World Health Organization), 2020). Hospitals were strained with the rapid demands of treating children and adults for the coronavirus infection. The United States saw record-level increases in unemployment rates and layoffs due to the viral spread. Without widespread vaccination, social distancing and lockdown measures seemed effective in reducing infection spread, albeit at the cost of halting the global economy (Roy, Dutta & Ghosh, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic forced a near-total shutdown of school buildings in the spring of 2020, causing an upheaval of K-12 schooling in the United States (Education Week, 2020). The government mandated teachers and students to continue instruction from their homes. Most research has primarily focused on addressing students' needs and well-being, rather than focusing on the needs and support systems required for teachers. A recent study conducted by Kush et al. (2022, November) indicated that teachers showed a significantly higher prevalence of adverse mental health issues during the pandemic in contrast to healthcare and office workers. It is noted that teaching remotely reported substantially higher distress levels than those teaching in person (Kush et al., 2022). The impact of the virus was not fully considered when requiring teachers to continue instruction. Although most teachers did not experience job loss, they faced family deaths, physical and mental health problems, significant changes in social relationships, a sense of self, and anxiety about the potential

extinction of their jobs. In these highly chaotic times, teachers created distinctive plans to continue instructing students through technology while managing their well-being. Special education teachers were given little to no time to adjust and prepare adequate lessons for students with single or multiple disabilities. Every teacher had to adjust to unbeknownst circumstances and use synchronous and asynchronous instruction to teach in new ways. Many schools were unprepared for remote instruction at the start of the pandemic, as they lacked appropriate and accessible technology, essential software, teacher training, and widespread internet access. Most students experienced difficulties like instability and lacked positive adult guidance and assistance at home (Turner, 2022).

Special education teachers serve an exceptional population of students who receive more unique services than general education students. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) identifies 13 distinct disability categories for Kindergarten through 12th-grade students who may require special education services. These categories encompass a range of conditions, and eligibility for special education is determined based on whether a child falls into one of these categories and if their school performance is adversely affected. Rodriguez & Murawski (2022) list the 13 IDEA categories of qualifying disabilities as:

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder
2. Deaf/Hard of Hearing
3. Deafblind
4. Emotional Disturbance
5. Intellectual Disability
6. Learning Disability
8. Non-Categorical Early Childhood
9. Orthopedic Impairment
10. Other Health Impairment
11. Speech and Language Impairment
12. Traumatic Brain Injury
13. Visual Impairment

7. Multiple Disabilities

Special education teachers managed students with multiple disabilities in conventional special education classes before the pandemic. The sudden shift to emergency remote instruction intensified the challenge, leaving special education teachers grappling with the complex demands of adapting their teaching methods and accommodations to an online format without adequate preparation or resources. They lacked the specialized training needed to supervise their learners with special educational needs and disabilities as they shifted to emergency remote instruction (Toquero, 2021). The current situation presents an additional difficulty for special education instructors and service providers, including occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists. To ensure compliance with the legal standards stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), they must negotiate the implementation of Individualized Education Program (IEPs). This difficulty stems from how teachers would balance the legal requirements outlined by IDEA and the Individualized Educational Plans for the students. The job requires extensive paperwork mandated by the government to adhere to all the provisions in each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). A critical component of their job is to build and maintain relationships with the students to help construct trust, confidence, and motivation to succeed. Special education teachers who switched to online instruction before the epidemic spoke of a challenging learning curve while utilizing online learning tools and resources (Crouse & Rice, 2018).

Special education residential schools in most states, which serve children with the most complex needs, remained open. Staff in such programs are considered "essential

workers" and are thus exempt from orders that have closed all non-essential workplaces (Gavin, 2020). Hanlon (2022) discussed how residential schools tackled the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, shedding light on diverse strategies adopted to ensure student safety and well-being while upholding educational continuity. These strategies encompassed implementing strict health protocols, transitioning to online learning platforms, and providing additional support for students' needs. The writer reported that the school swiftly transitioned to remote therapy services, while other residential schools persisted with in-person learning. Both day and residential programs adopted a partial cohort model, ensuring that students from each population remained separated and did not interact. This strategic approach aimed to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the school community while allowing for continued educational engagement. By implementing these measures, schools sought to strike a balance between maintaining essential face-to-face services and putting staff and student health and safety first.

Ybarra (2022) revealed that there is a scarcity of special education teachers in almost every state in the union. For years, Texas school districts have had difficulty hiring new teachers, and things got worse as the pandemic progressed. Disparities in access to special education services were exacerbated by remote learning, particularly affecting students from underprivileged backgrounds or those with limited access to technology. During these unprecedented times, teachers have experienced elevated levels of stress and burnout due to the pandemic, sparking concerns about potential increases in teacher attrition and impending shortages (Zamarro et al., 2021). Educators expressed feeling worn out from continuous health issues and overwhelmed by the demands of

distance learning. All these stressors affect teachers' mental health, regardless of whether they teach in person or online (Sparks, 2022). Amidst the complexities of managing diverse student needs and navigating educational policies, scarce resources, and consistent community support, it can be challenging to maintain a commitment to the profession. Teacher burnout has been known to affect special education teachers more than general education teachers. The probable reason for the increase in special education teacher shortage could be burnout. Therefore, it is now more important than ever to attract and retain special education teachers, with a focus on providing competitive pay, opportunities for professional growth, and support for their mental health and overall well-being.

In a study by Young-Park and Shin (2020), various student-related factors were identified as potential contributors to special education teacher burnout, including age, type of disability, behavioral issues, grade level, number of students, socioeconomic status, and classroom setting. The responses of special education teachers varied depending on the type of disability, behavioral challenges, and the intensity of difficulties faced by their students. According to Maslach et al. (1986), teacher burnout manifests as extreme emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, all of which can directly and indirectly affect students. This underscores the critical need for addressing burnout among educators to ensure optimal learning environments for students. In the fall of 2020, less than five months after the total shutdown, teachers were hastily sent back into school buildings, precipitating enormous distress among educators. This abrupt return to in-person teaching amidst ongoing uncertainties exacerbated the stress and challenges faced by teachers already grappling with the impacts of the

pandemic. Such circumstances further highlight the urgency of supporting teachers' mental health and well-being to mitigate burnout and maintain effective education delivery.

In retrospect, considering the COVID-19 phenomena, the frequent changes in instructional modalities, and the well-being of special education teachers, student outcomes are called into question. This study will attempt to understand special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic caused grief and disbelief in workers across the nation and multiple frontline workers, including our teachers. Teachers were expected to continue working through these tough times and to disregard their mental, physical, and emotional health to continue instructing their student learners. The effect of COVID-19 played a consequential role in the components of student outcomes. They were charged with changing the modalities of the instructional setting, accessibility to resources, and instructional methods to help their students succeed. This study examines special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. In particular, this study will be concerned with the effect of special education teachers (gender, ethnicity, and years of experience) on their attitudes about the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism).

Research Questions

Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the academic achievement component of student outcomes?
2. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the social behavior component of student outcomes?
3. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the socioemotional development component of student outcomes?
4. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, affect special education teachers' attitudes toward the absenteeism component of student outcomes?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for the field of education and can contribute substantially to the growing body of literature in several key areas. First, by examining the attitudes of special education teachers during the challenging period of COVID-19, this research provides valuable insights that can enrich the existing literature on inclusive education, highlighting the unique challenges educators face in adapting to unforeseen circumstances. Second, this study's findings could inform the development of targeted professional development programs. Understanding the experiences and perspectives of special education teachers and general education teachers working with or

without assistance during the pandemic can guide the creation of training modules that address specific needs arising from such situations. These programs can enhance the skills of educators, equipping them to navigate similar challenges in the future effectively.

Furthermore, the study's outcomes can be vital in shaping teacher preparation programming. By identifying the critical areas of support needed during crises, teacher preparation programs can be tailored to equip future educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle diverse learning environments, ensuring that they are better prepared to meet the needs of all students, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, the insights from this research can influence school outage preparation policies and procedures. Understanding teachers' experiences in special education and general education settings during periods of disruption can inform the development of comprehensive contingency plans. Schools can adapt their policies to better support teachers, ensuring the continuity of education and support services for students with special needs during emergencies.

Statement of Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of this study:

$H_{1.}$: ` There is a statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the academic achievement component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

H_2: There is a statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the social behavior component of student

outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

H_3: There is a statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the socioemotional development component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

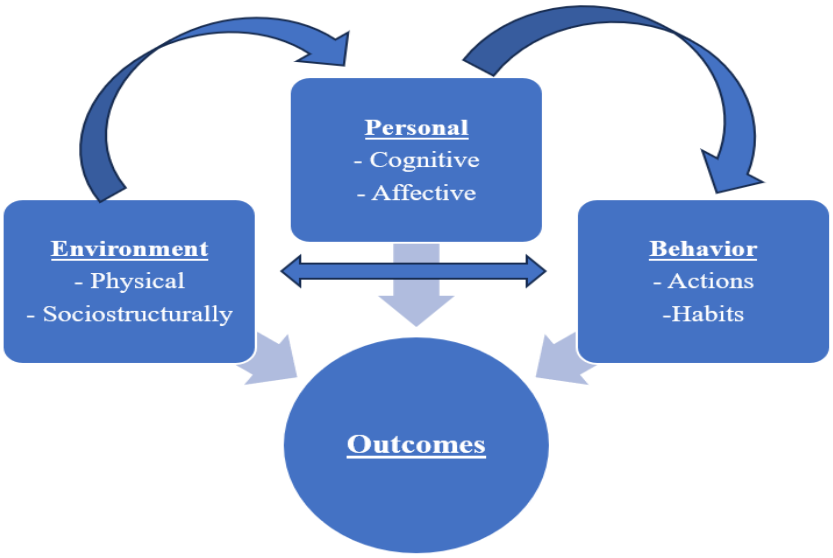
H_4: There is a statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the absenteeism component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura developed the social cognitive theory, and the part played in it by self-efficacy with the belief that you can successfully accomplish what you set out to do (Butler, 1998). Bandura (1997) communicates that self-efficacy is not a fixed quantity but can be acquired. Learning how to foster and develop it in ourselves, others, and the communities within which we live can then be seen as a significant priority (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is a malleable belief formed by personal appraisal of how well a person can execute courses of action to deal successfully with a given prospect (Stajkovic & Sergent, 2019). Bandera (1977) states that self-efficacy affects behavior, controls how a person feels about taking on new challenges and affects the ability to set new goals that may be difficult for them.

Figure 1

Bandura Social Cognitive Theory

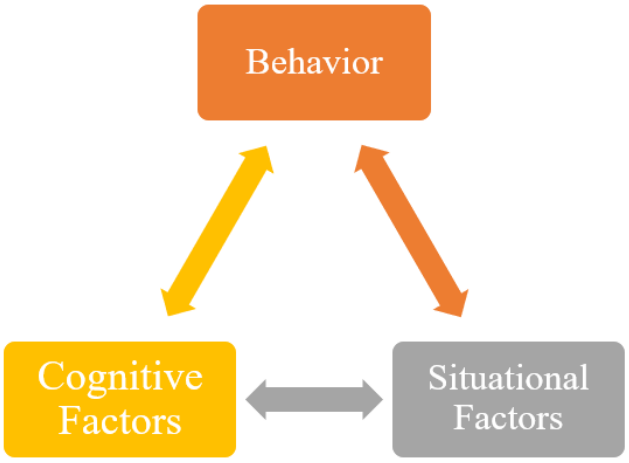


Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) reported that the RAND Corporation researchers first conceived teacher efficacy as the extent to which teachers believed that they could control the reinforcement of their actions, whether control of reinforcement lay within themselves or the environment. Their development was birthed from Julian Rotter's Social Learning Theory. Rotter's Social Learning Theory is a theory in which a person's behavior is controlled by their personality's response to the environment. Teacher efficacy is a cognitive process in which educators construct beliefs about their capacity to perform and positively impact students' outcomes (Brion, 2022). Teacher efficacy has been defined as the extent to which the teacher believes he or she can affect student performance (Berman et al., 1977). These beliefs influence the educators' level of effort, resilience, capacity to accept failures, and stress levels they experience when working in challenging situations such as COVID-19 (Brion, 2022). Teacher efficacy is

related to teachers' persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, and instructional behavior (Brion, 2022).

Figure 2

Julian Rotter's Social Learning Theory



Assumptions

The following assumptions were made concerning this empirical investigation:

1. It was assumed that the demographic factors of the special education teacher such as gender, ethnicity, and years of experience are significant predictors of student outcomes.
2. It was assumed that data collected from special and general education teachers were competent when answering the survey about their student outcomes.
3. It was assumed that student academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism were impacted by the special education teachers' attitude toward teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. It was assumed that the population and target sample would compile enough data to make the study generalizable.

Limitations

The following limitations were observed in this study:

1. This study was limited to special and general education teachers.
2. This study will be limited to special education and general education teachers who taught during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. This study was limited to general education teachers who serve special education students with or without special education teachers or aide assistance.
4. This study was limited to current special education and general education teachers.
5. This study was limited to special education and general education teachers in the selected suburban school district.
6. This study was limited to special education and general education teachers in the approved schools in the selected suburban school district.

Definition Of Terms

The researcher used the following terms throughout this study. These selected terms are operationally defined to provide lucidity and understanding to this research investigation.

1. Absenteeism — This term refers to special education students' failure to attend school (in person or virtually) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Academic Achievement — This term refers to the grading and success of special education student progress based on formal assessments, STAAR performance, and classroom assignments.
3. English Language Learners (ELL)—This term refers to students with limited English proficiency. In most cases, the students are not of national origin.
4. Ethnicity- This term refers to the special education teacher's selected race or culture that relates to their language, religion, or heritage.
5. Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) — This term refers to students who are qualified persons with disabilities who receive education in regular classes, with the use of related aid services in classrooms, homes, and private or public institutions (US Department of Education, 2010.)
6. Gender- This term refers to whether a special education teacher was male or female.
7. Individualized Education Plan (IEP)—This phrase denotes the provision of a formal document tailored to address the unique needs of students receiving special education services.
8. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) — This term refers to the federal legislation that helps children and youth with disabilities get special education and related services.
9. Social Behaviors—This term refers to the actions the special education students portray to their teachers while receiving educational instruction.
10. Socioemotional Development — This term refers to special education student's mental health status during the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Students with Disabilities (SWDs)—This term refers to a student with a cognitive, behavioral, or physical impairment that limits their abilities to participate fully in any activity.
12. Years of Experience- This phrase refers to the teacher's calculation based on the total number of years each teacher had been in service, including both their overall teaching experience and their specific years in the current school.

Organization of the Study

The empirical investigation was organized into five major chapters. Chapter 1 made a case for the study and consisted of the introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, theoretical framework, research hypotheses, assumptions, limitations, definitions of terms and variables, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 consisted of an extensive review of related literature, which focused on special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. Chapter 3 discussed and examined the study's design and methodological framework and included the type of design, population, sampling procedures, instrumentation, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, data-collection procedures, independent and dependent variables, null hypotheses, and statistical analysis. Chapter 4, on the other hand, presented the analysis of the data, a discussion of the results, and the data in table form. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, implications, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review examined special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. Unambiguously, this study was concerned with the predictability of the variables of special education teachers (gender, ethnicity, years of experience) and student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism) of student learners.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated worldwide social and economic upheaval, with the United States experiencing disproportionately high infection levels and economic fallout (Mueller et al., 2021). The virus is highly contagious and pathogenic, whose effects are not limited to humans alone (Bozkurt et al., 2022). Although COVID-19 is not the first pandemic to hit the nation, it has affected education most negatively. The swift and unanticipated start of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a great deal of uncertainty regarding the future of education (Bozkurt et al., 2022). All stakeholders, from educators, students, parents, and community agencies, have had to adjust to a new standard in order to thrive in the modern educational environment. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed educational systems to jump into the conditions of technology-mediated teaching and learning (Adov & Maeots, 2021). Every level of the educational system has been impacted, and it has been obliged to adjust to the unprecedented effects of the global crisis and respond to crises by going into emergency mode (Bozkurt et al., 2022). Rolling school closures, high absenteeism rates, and severe personnel shortages have all affected

schools (Kuhfield et al., 2022). The pandemic and school closures not only jeopardized children's health and safety with domestic violence and child labor increasing but also impacted student learning substantially (Ahlgren et al., 2022). The pandemic resulted in declining scores across all student subgroups, including resilient demographics such as white students and upper-middle class backgrounds (Camera, 2022). (Dorn et al., 2021) reports that students in majority-Black schools ended the school year six months behind in both math and reading, while students in majority-white schools ended up just four months behind in math. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students' mode of setting changed unorthodoxly.

Keeping in touch with students one-on-one and doing frequent check-ins in viral environments proved particularly difficult for school districts in rural areas and areas with high poverty rates early in the epidemic (Hodgman, 2021). According to UNESCO, over 1.5 billion students in 195 countries are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic school closures (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). At the same time, while many aspects of the pandemic make estimating its impact on achievement difficult, there are parallels between the current situation and other planned and unplanned reasons on why students who miss school can provide information about how big of an impact COVID-19 could have (Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, special education teachers formulated comprehensive contingency plans to ensure their students' continuous education and support. They developed remote learning resources tailored to special education students' needs, including digital materials for the online platform. Teachers performed virtual instructional lessons, adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles

while utilizing online platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and many more. It was viable for the teachers to collaborate with parents and guardians to modify individual education plans (IEPs) to suit the change in settings (from face-to-face to remote learning). Should a school or teacher develop or implement an Individualized Education Program (IEP) without parental consent, they would be in violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which could impeded parental participation in the process (Nissman, 2020). Special education teachers provided guidance on creating sensory-friendly home environments and recommended sensory activities to support students' emotional regulation and focus.

Special Education Teacher's Experiences During COVID-19

Following COVID-19, special education teachers were preparing to switch to distance learning, but there were a lot of unknowns such as how to provide quality instruction and access to technology for all students with disabilities (SWDs), how long it would be before schools would reopen (in the physical sense), how to ensure the mandates to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would be implemented, and how best to support the unique needs of students with disabilities (SWD's) and their families (Glessner, 2020). Minimal information and guidance were provided to special education teachers on how to navigate the new way of instruction. Teachers could only bring some of their supplemental resources to assist students with their learning. Teachers relied on communication between the students and parents to ensure that learning took place. The revelation that teaching students online was an unprecedented expectation was a surprise. During the pandemic, some special education

teachers were not automatically able to use technology to meet their goals for teaching students with disabilities (SWDs) (Rice, 2022).

Steed and Leech (2021) explored a study on the experiences of early childhood special education and general education teachers during COVID-19. The researchers sought to determine the similarities and differences in providing remote learning to their students in March and April 2020. The article discussed the disparities in resources and technological access, which significantly impacted the ability of teachers to deliver remote instruction. The teachers created and implemented ways to involve multiple stakeholders in the learning environment. The findings report vital challenges, such as working with families by relying on families for children's engagement in online activities, lack of guidance and administrative support, missing in-person instruction, technology, completing assessments, and lack of inclusion. The teachers communicated that they spend more time planning and communicating with families than providing instruction to children. While ESCE teachers were more likely to receive training in online instruction tools, 41% of Early Childhood (EC) and 44% of Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teachers report not receiving any training on remote learning. The article suggests emotional and social concerns with teachers and students, as losing in-person learning was highly influential during the pandemic.

Stelitano et al. (2021) investigated teachers' methods of instructing students with disabilities (SWDs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on difficulties teachers encounter when modifying their lesson plans to meet the needs of a wide range of students. The researchers examined the transition to remote and hybrid learning models and the challenges of giving students with disabilities (SWDs) specialized assistance.

Teachers in remote arrangements were equally likely, if not more likely, to report weekly one-on-one and small-group communication with students with disabilities (SWDs) as teachers in hybrid and in-person arrangements but reported significantly lower assignment completion for students with disabilities. The article acknowledges the digital divide and its effects on equal educational opportunities while highlighting technology's role in enabling students with various abilities to access education. It looks at the innovative strategies teachers employ to cater to the special needs of students with disabilities (SWDs), including personalized learning plans, assistive technology, and virtual classrooms.

Hurwitz et al. (2021) investigated a mixed-method quantitative study to examine how special education teachers and school-based specialists navigated and adapted to working with students with Autism during the pandemic. The researchers surveyed 106 special education teachers through a written survey on how they implemented student's IEP's and evidence-based practices. Based on the findings, many teachers reported adding contingencies to student's IEPs. Teachers reported that it was an overwhelming experience; servicing students during the pandemic required innovation and adaptation, revising and implementing collaboration with parents/caregivers, and contrasting student responses to virtual instruction. The participants performed in three capacity settings when teaching during COVID-19: distance, hybrid, and inconsistent in-person learning modalities. The participants expressed having to adjust student service minutes, dropping social goals, and needing more availability to work on students' behavioral goals.

Transition Programming for Students Receiving Special Education Services During COVID-19

When a student with disabilities graduates from high school at 18, they may possess some or all the skills necessary to continue their educational journey. Typically, students meet with their case manager or special education teacher to discuss their post-graduation plans. Students can attend college or university, pursue vocational training, join the military, and enter the workforce. Exceptional students can continue receiving educational services until they are 21 through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Of the three federal laws addressing individuals with disabilities, the IDEA focuses exclusively on education with a set age limit of 21 years or when the student graduates or legally exits high school (Clark, 2021). Special education students undergo a prolonged, well-planned transition process that starts long before children leave school. It is not a sudden event. This process consists of several intentional actions and interventions to prepare children for life after school, ensuring they get the knowledge, tools, and assistance they need to face adult difficulties successfully.

Every step of the transition process, from early assessment and identification of individual needs to executing customized lesson plans and career development, aims to provide students with the tools to become independent, follow their dreams, and lead satisfying lives in their communities. When educators and stakeholders understand the value of early intervention and thorough planning, they may help to ensure a smooth transition. The IEP transition plan aims to increase the likelihood of these kids seeking postsecondary education and ensure they can function as adults in the real world. (Lamar University, 2022). During the pandemic, most students receiving special education

services did not receive transition services due to the immediate shutdown of schools. Regardless of their prior service status, graduating disabled students who do not intend to continue their education will not be eligible for pre-employment transition services, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Diament, 2020). Research that reflects students' success with postsecondary transition outcomes is limited. Secondary student learners with neurodevelopment and developmental disorders have lost a lot of support and services that were provided to them in school before the pandemic. Jeste (2020) explained that losing these in-person educational supports will have serious repercussions, increasing the load on caregivers and jeopardizing the health and well-being of the child in general.

Students, especially those from low-income households or with additional learning needs, are further disadvantaged by unequal access to technology and online sources. Mazzotti et al. (2023) examined previous literature work to determine which in-school factors were impactful for students with disabilities to achieve better outcomes after graduation. The researchers reviewed 88 articles dating from 2011 to 2019 and identified 23 predictors to support post-school success. The research was conducted to help educational stakeholders find ways to examine and implement their transition programs. The findings from this research present that in-school-based programming is a promising predictor of the future success of special education students. The promising predictors identified in this research were goal setting, paid employment/work experience, self-care/independent living skills, and exit exam/high school diploma status. These services are typically offered through Work-Based Learning programs by special education teachers in high schools.

As K-12 schools shift into recovery mode for students with disabilities, the oldest students face a particular challenge: getting the most out of special education services before they seek to live more independent lives as adults (Blad, 2022). Access to essential transition services such as job training, work experience, community integration programs, and independent living skills development has been hampered by the closure of schools and remote education. Significant delays in identifying and responding to support needs meant delays in implementing the transition plan, which were made more difficult by problems with assessment and evaluation. On the focus of special education students, the drastic shift to remote learning and limited social interactions intensified feelings of isolation and anxiety, which, in turn, obstructed their ability to learn, cultivate social skills, and arrange for independence.

During the pandemic, Mulhern and Steiner (2022) examined high school principals' and teachers' perspectives on college and career readiness supports for postsecondary transition years (2020 and 2021). The researchers utilized the Learn Together Surveys (LTS) to determine which student populations received transition support, how the support has changed since the pandemic's beginning, and what barriers and resources were reported. About 67 percent of principals reported that almost all students with disabilities received sufficient support. Students who excelled academically had the most readily available support for navigating the transition to postsecondary education. At the same time, those facing academic difficulties or lacking guidance encountered significant obstacles in accessing similar resources. Based on the findings, the barriers that prevented students from receiving sufficient support are lack of motivation, inadequate family engagement, and time and staffing constraints. The high

school principals reported that additional staff members and counselors were the most desired resources to assist with postsecondary transitions. Teachers reported supporting postsecondary transitions to fewer students in the first year of the pandemic (Mulhern & Steiner, 2022).

Workforce Readiness

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered widespread economic disruptions, declining job opportunities, and unemployment rates. High school graduates entering the workforce in this period faced a significantly tighter and more unpredictable job market than those who had graduated in previous years. A critical piece of entry-level positions, especially in promoting and programming improvement, embraced remote work during the pandemic, reshaping the dynamic of the conventional work environment. This shift introduced exceptional difficulties for ongoing alums, who needed to wrestle with virtual onboarding and the potential for social seclusion. To beat these obstacles, graduates embraced imaginative methodologies, utilizing cooperative devices, online mentorship projects, and dynamic correspondence to coordinate in their remote groups effectively.

As of 2023, the students graduating from college were first-year students in high school during COVID-19. Known as Generation Z (born 1997 to 2012), they are heavily judged for being unprepared for the job-readiness process. They lack face-to-face interactions, poor communication skills, lack of productivity, short attention spans, and lack motivation (Hart, 2023; Heubeck, 2023; Steinberg, 2024). Due to the pandemic, Generation Z students relied heavily on technology to solve problems and cannot adapt to the current issue. Students need hands-on experience and fundamental soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking. According to a recent

survey, 58% of recent graduates are unprepared for the workforce, nearly half of employers have had to terminate a recent college graduate, 38% of employers avoided hiring college graduates in favor of older employees, and 1 in 5 employers have had a recent college graduate bring a parent to a job interview (Intelligent, 2024).

College Readiness

Seniors in high school report that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their postsecondary goals and opinions of their readiness for college. (ACT, 2023). It has caused a striking decrease in college enrollment. The pandemic caused disruptions in accessing vital college-planning resources such as career counseling, standardized testing, and college visits. The unprecedented change disrupted first-year college students' experience in almost every facet of their college life (e.g., instruction mode, social interaction, living arrangements, and employment status (Schnieders & Moore, 2021). This could have impeded students' ability to make well-formed decisions and navigate the college application process effectively. According to National Student Clearinghouse Research Center data, undergraduate students are down 2.5 percent below last year's level (NSCRC, 2020).

As of Fall 2023, undergraduate enrollment grew for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic this fall, and community colleges are starting to recover from the pandemic, showing a growth of 4.4 percent. (NSCRC, 2020). National data from 2019-20 shows that an estimated 20% of undergraduate students and 10% of postbaccalaureate students enrolled in U.S. postsecondary institutions reported having some form of disability (NCES, 2023). Over 40 percent of new graduates did not meet ACT college readiness in any subject, and only 21 percent met benchmarks in all four

(Sparks, 2023). While the drop has been faster since the pandemic began in 2020, college readiness has declined for over a decade (Sparks, 2023). Research shows that students of color and low-income students are highly susceptible to struggle academically. Colleges are facing a multi-layered issue with students who have been enrolled for the past two years and found college to be too challenging and overwhelming and students entering college who spent their COVID years in high school learning from home and lacked the necessary skills to succeed (Krislov, 2022).

Haplin (2022) researched the impact of COVID-19 on first-generation college students (FGCS). The researcher surveyed first-generation college students in Fall 2020 to determine the motivators and barriers to attending college amid the pandemic. Financial aid and family influence are two significant factors that affect FGCS's decision to enroll in and remain in college. Family influence served as a motivator and stressor with enrollment. The study highlights the need for extra assistance during the transition to college and recommends programs like FGCS to increase interaction and living/learning communities. The participant's return to in-person instruction means social and academic pressures that were lessened during virtual instruction. Mekouar (2024) reports that there has been an increase in mental health issues among college students, which professors try to accommodate by becoming less strict about class attendance and more flexible about assignment due dates. The stress and social isolation resulting from the pandemic had an imbalanced impact on students' mental health, potentially influencing their motivation, concentration, and academic performance. Fawcett (2023) reports that students of all kinds seemed to need more sharp foundational math skills and rigorous study habits, and some had flawed understandings of basic concepts.

Teacher's Gender and Academic Achievement

Women make up the majority of teachers in classrooms. Ironically, teaching was formerly thought to be a profession dominated by men. Women did not show up in the classroom in significant numbers until the 1800s when men started choosing labor-intensive occupations (Wong, 2019; Smith, 2022). As of the 2020-21 school year, of those who taught in public schools, 77% were women, and 23% were men. (NCES, 2023). Researchers are embarking on the need and growth of male teachers in the field (Andrews, 2023; Borowski & Will, 2021; Cole et al., 2019; Snyder, 2008). Throughout history, it has been shown that there is a massive gender gap in the teaching profession. Women have dominated in numbers as classroom teachers. Female students are more likely to have a same-gender teacher than males. Male students are less likely to have the same-gender teacher in primary and secondary schools. With the shortage of male teachers, male students are not receiving the same learning opportunities because of the lack of access to male teachers (Stevenson, 2019).

Gong, Lu, and Song (2016) examined the gender of teachers in education production. The study focused on determining whether teacher gender affects the learning of girls and boys at the middle school level. The results of the study show that, in comparison to male teachers, female teachers have a positive and significant impact on the academic and noncognitive outcomes of girls. It showed a gender gap in reverse, with girls scoring higher on tests than boys. The fact that female students who have female teachers report higher levels of learning self-assessment is a significant factor in this study. If a male teacher teaches girls, the likelihood of them experiencing depression, the blues, or discontent at school is higher than that of men. Regarding male students learning

from female teachers, there does not seem to be any effect on their results. This study did not present any findings on the impact of male students having a male teacher. Male teachers are not rushing into the classrooms for several reasons, such as lack of pay, lack of same-gender coworkers, and growth opportunities. Boys and girls learn differently, so having a male teacher who inspires them every day in the classroom is very beneficial. (USA Today, July 2017). In the article written by Bhana et al., (2019, November), the authors report:

> "Male teachers in the classroom will allow male students to observe non-violent men who interact positively with women. Male students will learn from teachers whom they perceive as like themselves to promote alternative, non-violent, and gender-equitable versions of masculinity. Male teachers can enhance the decision-making process and drive positive outcomes. To attract and maintain male teachers, schools should present a positive representation of teachers from various demographic groups".

A recent study compiled by Garza (2022) examined the opinions of male/female teachers of color about their sense of competence and contentment with their career decision to deal with young children in primary settings. This mixed-methods study that was collected over the course of two years. It surveyed thirty male teachers who teach elementary students. According to the study's findings, 93.3% of participants said that males should seriously explore a career in teaching. It is widely accepted (86.7% of respondents) that males possess the patient, caring, and empathetic qualities to deal with young children. To assist students' learning and development, all respondents—male and

female of color elementary school teachers agreed that they can create and implement engaging learning activities for young children.

There is a gap in student math and reading scores in student achievement based on same-gender teacher assignments. Winters et al. (2013) examined K-12 student academic careers based on same-gender teacher assignments. Based on this research, they concluded that there is a statistically significant positive impact between arithmetic achievement for both male and female students and having a female teacher at all grade levels. According to this study, female students gain marginally more from having a female math teacher than male pupils. The study showed that female instructors contribute more to student accomplishments after elementary school. However, it did not establish a statistically significant impact between teachers' gender and student achievement in primary grades. According to this study, middle and high school grades considerably affect students' math and reading achievement significantly.

Single-gender (single-sex) schools are familiar to the field of education. Single-gender school settings are typically private and serve students in small classroom settings. Single-gender schools and classrooms give students more opportunities to take risks, build confidence, and enjoy new challenges without fear of failing in front of the other sex (Superville, 2016; Borst, 2022; Stanberry, 2023). Eisenkopf et al. (2014) conducted a study to examine if single-sex classes would improve the academic performance of female high school students. The study examined some insightful information. The researchers surveyed two hundred and thirteen (213) 9th through 12th-grade female students randomly selected to partake in a single-sex or co-educational math class. The data from the research shows that female students with excellent math skills receive

beneficial results from a same-sex school. Based on the data from the 9th-grade students, females who have not been retained and dropped out showed positive performance in same-sex math classes. There is adequate significance in the differential impact on peer-gender effect with male and female students. There needs to be more evidence to present that the lack of male students present in class with females (co-educational) would improve their academic performance.

Teachers' Gender and Social Behaviors

Teaching is an emotional exercise incorporating many daily classroom events with students that may make teachers tense or angry but also bring joy, self-confidence, and connectedness (de Ruiter et al., 2020). For a teacher, interacting with the students and displaying positive behavior, such as asking questions, understanding their thoughts, and showing interest and appreciation, increases the student's motivation and success (Ulug et al., 2011). Unintentionally or intentionally, teachers treat students differently based on their gender. Most teachers believe boys are prone to be impulsive, disruptive, and lack care about their learning. As for the female students, teachers believe they are more structured, compliant, and cooperative. Female students are presented as calmer and more focused, whereas boys are viewed as rowdy and lacking interest in learning. Gong, Lu, and Song (2016) asserted that females are more prone than boys to experience sadness, blues, or unhappiness at school if a male instructor instructs them. Boys' natural learning strengths, like impulsivity, single-task focus, spatial and kinesthetic learning, and physical assertiveness, are frequently seen by teachers as challenges. (King & Gurian, 2006; Dueck, 2017). The teacher's gender might also capture teachers' biased behavior. Teachers who tend to be biased against boys in their evaluations might also engage in

other unobserved classroom practices that make boys less likely to succeed. They might be less encouraging, less friendly, focus less attention on boys, or be more critical (Terrier, 2020).

Dee (2006) presented a thought-provoking piece titled "The Why Chromosome: How a teacher's gender affects boys and girls," which provides essential insights on the dynamics of gender in the classroom. He emphasizes the widely held belief that, regardless of the topic, guys are often characterized as being more unruly and inattentive than girls. Remarkably, Dee notes that males are more likely to be classified as disruptive in a classroom headed by a female instructor. On the other hand, females are more likely to say that they do not look forward to specific topics when taught by a male instructor (Dee, 2006). Examining the underlying theories, Dee notes the range of viewpoints that academic institutions have studied. According to one perspective, a teacher's gender affects how they interact with their students. According to a different perspective, regardless of their overt acts or words, educators operate as role models for gender roles. This latter viewpoint holds that having a teacher who is the same gender as their students encourages better conduct, more engagement, and improved academic success. By extending these ideas, it becomes evident that gender dynamics play a vital role in shaping the experiences and outcomes that take place in the classroom. Teachers' ideas of gender might unintentionally influence students' conduct and attitudes toward learning. Teachers may act as gender role models for their students, emphasizing the value of diversity in learning environments where students can interact with various role models that represent their identities and experiences.

In this study, which reflects the usage of the NELS (National Education Longitudinal Survey), the researcher observed student achievement and student behaviors. Adverse gender effects have an impact on both boys and girls, but because most middle school instructors are women, they disproportionately affect the male half of the student body (Dee, 2006). According to the researcher's estimations, the achievement gap in reading would close by around a third by the end of middle school if half of the English instructors in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were male and had an additive influence on students' learning. Similarly, these findings imply that gender relations brought about by the majority of female instructors may contribute to boys' relative inclination to be perceived as disruptive in these grades. It also tackles any gender prejudice in evaluation and classroom administration.

Teachers are subjectively prone to managing student behaviors due to prior interactions. A study executed by Chang and Davis (2006) explored the role of teacher appraisals in shaping the dynamics of their relationships with students, specifically focusing on how teachers form judgments of disruptive behavior in students. The research seeks to deconstruct how teachers perceive and evaluate disruptive behavior in students and how these appraisals influence their interactions with students. The study employs a comprehensive research approach, incorporating surveys and interviews with teachers to gain insights into their perceptions and judgments of disruptive behavior. It also examines the impact of these judgments on teacher-student relationships and classroom dynamics. Findings from the research suggest that teachers' appraisals of disruptive behavior are influenced by multiple factors, including the students' past behavior, classroom context, and the teachers' emotional reactions. The article highlights the significance of teacher-

student relationships and emphasizes that negative appraisals of disruptive behavior can adversely affect these relationships. Teachers who hold negative judgments of students are more likely to use punitive disciplinary measures, leading to strained relationships and potential academic setbacks for the students. Additionally, the study identifies the importance of professional development and training for teachers to manage disruptive behavior and form more constructive judgments effectively. Strategies that promote empathy, communication, and understanding are recommended to improve teacher-student relationships.

Teachers' Gender and Student Socioemotional Development

The classroom is one of the critical environments where students develop their social and emotional skills. In school, children observe, identify, learn, and replicate social and emotional skills, social norms, and behavior codes (Villasenor, 2017). Goetz et al. (2021) communicated that emotions impact relationship quality, with high achievement contributing to positive student-teacher relationships. Teachers who demonstrate they care about their students, encourage them, and provide them with emotional support and a proper atmosphere that makes them feel valued, respected, and safe can positively influence their socio-emotional and academic development (Hallinan, 2008). The influence of gender norms on students' behavior in the classroom and interactions with their peers may reveal a lot about the dynamics between the instructor and the students, mainly when the students and the teacher are of the opposite gender (Wadsworth-Hendrix, 2015). Ulug et al. (2011) indicated that a teacher's good attitude impacts students' motivation, attitude toward learning and homework, self-confidence, and personality development.

Scherer and Cleveland (2022) investigate the effects of teacher-student demographic matching on the development of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills. It explores whether aligning teacher and student demographics, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic background, impacts the effectiveness of SEL interventions and the acquisition of social-emotional skills in students. The study underscores the growing interest in demographic matching within education, particularly in addressing educational disparities. It asserts that students may have stronger connections with teachers who share similar backgrounds, potentially leading to increased engagement and receptivity to SEL programs. By employing a diverse dataset and statistical analysis, the research assesses how teacher-student demographic alignment influences various facets of SEL, including self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The findings indicate that demographic matching can positively affect specific SEL outcomes. Students paired with teachers of the same demographic group may experience improved self-awareness and self-regulation. Moreover, such students may demonstrate enhanced social awareness and relationship skills, fostering a more inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere.

Teacher's Gender and Student Absenteeism

The attendance of students in courses and at school is crucial to getting the most out of educational and training initiatives (Akkus & Cinkir, 2022). The correlation between students, teachers, and families is significant when factoring in student absenteeism. It is now well supported by empirical data showing instructors influence student outcomes other than test scores, such as absenteeism, suspension rates, noncognitive abilities, and college enrollment (Hansen & Quintero, 2020). Gentle-

Genitty, Kyere, and Hong (2021) provided an in-depth analysis of the role of teachers in student absenteeism using a person-environment perspective that addresses discrimination, identity, and communication. They conducted two research studies examining intersectional lenses, recognizing the junction of different identities, including gender, race, and socioeconomic class. It explores how these intersections amplify the challenges faced by marginalized students, leading to higher rates of absenteeism. The researchers utilized surveys and interview questions to investigate the experiences of students from diverse backgrounds. In study one, the findings revealed that discriminatory behaviors shown by teachers significantly impacted student absenteeism. Study two examines absenteeism via an intersectional lens to determine how it affects kids' academic performance. The study suggests that economic inequality between races can be attributed to biased teacher-student relationships, which could lead to absenteeism and inferior academic performance. The researchers incorporated various external factors such as parental and peer support, family incomes, GPA (grade point averages), and neighborhood safety, yet these factors presented negative associations with student absenteeism.

Teachers Ethnicity and Student Academic Achievement

The reason minority pupils in the United States are not performing as well as their white counterparts can be explained by the link between teacher quality and student accomplishment (Lin & Bates, 2014). Teachers are autonomous people, and pupils are dependent according to the responsibilities these people have been given in the American educational system (Douglas et al., 2008). Teachers' ethnicity is a focal point in the classrooms. Students are subjectively prone to sense an instant connection to teachers of

the same race or ethnicity. They have a sense of belief that the teachers would understand their circumstances and change their current outcomes. It is imperative and essential for students to be taught by teachers from the same race and ethnicity. When they have just one black teacher in elementary school, black students—especially black boys from low-income households—are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college (Borowski & Will, 2023).

The demographic divide between teachers and students is a growing public concern (Cheng & Haplin, 2016). In public schools, mainly in metropolitan areas, most pupils are members of racial and ethnic minorities. On the other hand, racial or ethnic minorities make up fewer than 20% of the teaching workforce (NYU, 2016). America's teachers are overwhelmingly white and female, even though America's students are primarily people of color (Borowski & Will, 2023). Minorities have historically been underrepresented among teachers, but with the pattern of projected retirements and the expected relative growth of minority enrollments, this problematic situation is expected to worsen (Dee, 2007). In 2020-21, public school teachers were eighty percent white, nine percent Hispanic, six percent were African American, two percent were Asian, and two percent were two or more races (NCES, 2023). Diversifying the workforce is urgently needed to match student demographics (Garza, 2022) more closely.

Gerhenson et al. (2021) explored the long-term effects of having teachers of the same race as students. The study investigates whether exposure to same-race teachers during elementary school has lasting impacts on student's educational outcomes and future success. The research utilizes a large dataset of students from diverse backgrounds. It employs rigorous statistical methods to analyze the relationship between same-race

teacher exposure and various outcomes, including test scores, high school graduation rates, college attendance, and employment. Findings indicate that Black students who have had at least one Black teacher during their elementary school years are more likely to graduate high school, attend college, and pursue higher education degrees. These effects are particularly pronounced for Black male students. The study suggests that same-race teacher exposure can be pivotal in narrowing the educational achievement gap and promoting long-term success for minority students. The research also underscores the importance of teacher diversity and representation in the education system, highlighting the potential positive impact on students' trajectories. This article reveals that exposure to same-race teachers during elementary school has enduring positive effects on educational outcomes, especially for Black students. It emphasizes the significance of teacher diversity in addressing educational disparities and promoting long-term success for minority students.

Student academic achievement can be placed on the motivation of the student and teacher. Stereotypical threats are prevalent within schools. Students may fear that their racial identification determines how their education is presented to them. Stereotype threat is the idea that students may feel anxious in circumstances where they think stereotypes may apply (e.g., Black students with White professors, female students with Male teachers), which might impede their academic identity and subsequent accomplishment (Thomas et al, 2009). Teacher-student solid relationships can affect student ratings. Relationships can be a motivating factor in student ratings because such relationships can motivate students, who tend to be more receptive to teachers with strong ties (Varga, 2017; Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015; Arrascue, 2023).

Teachers Ethnicity and Student Social Behaviors

Teachers with the same ethnicity students tend to have stronger relationships (Gottfried et al., 2021; Sawchuk, 2015). Teachers of the same ethnicity or race as their students may have a deeper understanding of their students' cultural experiences, which can positively influence classroom dynamics and student behavior. These teachers are often positive role models and inspire students to succeed academically and behave. They are more likely to use culturally sensitive discipline methods that can help improve student behaviors. Teachers who share a cultural or ethnic background with their students may be better equipped to build rapport and trust, which leads to better behavior. The school's rules, decisions, attitudes, and practices impact how well a teacher can manage the classroom. Will and Najarro (2023) communicated that curriculum, behavioral standards, language usage, and other aspects of school life still perpetuate the idea that white norms are the norm. According to culturally sustaining pedagogy, it is unrealistic to expect pupils of color to conform to middle-class, white norms. However, their cultural ways of being should be explored, honored, and nurtured by educators (Split, Kooman & Thijs, 2011). For example, when a teacher harbors negative preconceptions about the student and has internalized bad attitudes about the relationship, the student's disobedient behavior is more likely to be interpreted as confrontational and dangerous (Split, Kooman & Thijs, 2011).

Lindsay and Hart (2017) investigated the influence of interactions with teachers of the same racial background on disciplinary outcomes for Black students in North Carolina. Its primary aim is to discern whether Black students' experiences with school discipline are affected by exposure to teachers of the same race. Utilizing an extensive

dataset and employing advanced statistical techniques, the study examines disciplinary consequences, specifically suspension rates, for Black students with varying levels of exposure to Black teachers. The results reveal that Black students who have at least one Black teacher during their elementary school years face a reduced likelihood of suspension compared to those who have no Black teachers. This implies that the presence of same-race teachers contributes positively to mitigating disciplinary disparities among Black students.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates that the advantages of having same-race teachers are particularly notable for Black male students and those hailing from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In particular, black male students experience significantly lower suspension rates when black teachers teach them. The study underscores the importance of promoting diversity within the teaching profession and highlights the potential benefits of representation within educational environments. It asserts that the presence of teachers sharing the same racial background can foster more constructive and supportive teacher-student relationships, ultimately resulting in fewer disciplinary incidents and an enhanced overall educational experience for Black students. This article provides empirical evidence supporting the notion that exposure to teachers of the same race can yield positive effects on disciplinary outcomes for Black students, with a particular emphasis on the advantages for Black males and economically disadvantaged students. This research underscores the critical role of teacher diversity in addressing racial disparities in education and advancing equity in the educational experiences of all students.

Teachers' Ethnicity and Student Socioemotional Development

Teachers' ethnicity impact on student socioemotional development is a multifaceted and crucial area of education research. Studies have shown that when students see educators who share their ethnic background, it can lead to increased feelings of belonging and connection within the school environment (Miller, 2018; Nistioka, 2018; Gist, et al., 2021; & Will & Najarro, 2022; Teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds often bring unique cultural perspectives, empathy, and understanding to the classroom, fostering a more inclusive atmosphere where students' socioemotional needs are met effectively. Teacher ethnicity can influence students' perceptions of fairness, cultural identity, and self-esteem, all of which are integral to socioemotional development. Positive teacher-student relationships, especially those formed through cultural understanding, can enhance students' emotional well-being, resilience, and social skills. Moreover, teachers from similar ethnic backgrounds can serve as role models, inspiring students to set high academic and personal goals, thereby positively impacting their socioemotional growth.

Wright, Gottfried, and Le (2017) investigated the influence of racial resemblance between students and their teachers on kindergarten children's emotional and social growth. The research methodology includes analyzing data from different kindergarten classes and examining interactions between same-race students and teachers. Results show that when students share the same race as their kindergarten teachers, social-emotional development has significant positive outcomes. Children in these classrooms have improved social skills, emotional regulation, and overall emotional well-being. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of racial identification for young

students, suggesting that a teacher who reflects their racial identity promotes a sense of belonging and cultural understanding. This sense of belonging is associated with increased social competence and emotional stability in students. Latino English Language Learners (ELL) students demonstrated much lower externalizing behaviors when paired with a Latino teacher. However, there was no improvement in externalizing behaviors when Latino ELL students were paired with a Spanish-speaking, non-Latino teacher (Wright et al., 2017).

Chang and Demyan (2007) explored how stereotypes affect the perceptions and communication of teachers and, thus, the emotional and social development of students from different ethnic backgrounds. The research methodology examines teachers' prejudices and stereotypes about students of different ethnicities. The results show that teachers' stereotypes significantly influence their expectations and behavior toward students. For example, Asian students may face the "model minority" stereotype, which may lead to high academic expectations but neglect their emotional needs. In contrast, black students may be stereotyped for behavioral problems, which affects their social-emotional development and teacher-student relationships. Their research implies that teachers may unknowingly treat students differently based on ethnicity, affecting their self-esteem, emotional well-being, and overall socioemotional development.

Teacher's Ethnicity and Student Absenteeism

Research on whether there is a connection between a teacher's ethnicity and student absenteeism needs to be improved. The school counselor's perspective on how student absences affect the school and each student's academic performance has received attention in research (Ozcan, 2020; Edwards, 2013; Zimcheck, 2009; Bartle, 2022).

Student absenteeism is not just the reflection of a student's refusal to report to school but the disproportionate and biased acts of teachers utilizing exclusionary discipline actions such as expulsions, alternative school placements, and suspensions (in and out of school). Expulsion discipline, which involves removing students from the classroom through punishments such as suspension and expulsions, deprives students of learning opportunities (Leung-Gagne et al., 2022). Black students, especially boys, are suspended and expelled at much higher rates than white students (Loomis et al., 2021; Welsh, 2021; Winerman, 2021; UNDEDOCR, 2014). Teacher diversity is essential because it can serve as a positive role model for students whose racial and ethnic backgrounds are underrepresented. Minority students often benefit from teachers who share their racial or ethnic identity, leading to better academic performance, higher standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates.

Tran and Gershenson (2021) discussed experimental estimates of the "student participation production function," looking specifically at the role of teacher and student ethnicity in shaping participation patterns in primary education. The researchers examine the effects of various interventions on student participation rates using a rigorous experimental design. The determining factor is the ethnic background of both teachers and students. The results show that the ethnicity of teachers and students can influence participation outcomes. Students from underrepresented minority backgrounds tend to have higher participation rates when taught by teachers who share their ethnic identity. It suggests that cross-ethnic matching of teachers and students can positively reduce absenteeism among minority students. In addition, the study examines the impact of interventions such as financial incentives, parental involvement, and teacher involvement

on participation. This implies that although the overall effectiveness of these interventions to improve engagement may be high, the benefits may differ according to the ethnic makeup of the teacher-student relationship. The study emphasizes the importance of considering the ethnic background of both teachers and students when planning measures aimed at correcting absenteeism. This suggests that strategies to promote the ethnic adjustment of teachers and students may reduce chronic absenteeism, especially among minority students.

Minus-Vincent (2022) investigated whether race-matching can forecast an increase in African American students' academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, and graduation rates. The study focused on various variables of the teachers, such as teachers' race, ethnicity, and years of experience in the school and school setting. The study's main objective was to ascertain if decreasing racial and ethnic performance gaps and other persistent student outcome discrepancies may be attributed to the diversity of the teaching profession. The researcher used expanded data from the 2018–19 academic year from the New Jersey Department of Education. The results indicate that when teachers and students share the same racial or ethnic background, it favors student outcomes. Students taught by teachers with a similar racial or ethnic background generally demonstrate improved academic performance and better attendance records. Furthermore, the study suggests that teacher-student matching based on racial or ethnic backgrounds may also play a role in reducing disciplinary incidents, leading to fewer behavioral issues in the classroom. Although teacher influence can be significant during the school year, other factors outside of school, such as family dynamics and community support, also affect long-term participation patterns. The lasting effects do not stop once they have graduated

high school. UC Irvine reports that young adults suspended or expelled from high school are more than twice as likely to face criminal charges, be found guilty, and serve time in jail (Brazil, 2022).

Teachers' Years of Experience and Academic Achievement

Student academic achievement is affected by many different factors. Teachers are framed as the core individuals expected to ensure positive outcomes for students. Throughout a teacher's career, advances in student success are **positively** correlated with their teaching experience (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Teachers' presence in the schools could be more beneficial in student performance outcomes. Students' need for consistency starts with the teacher being present and ready to actively engage daily. Teachers are thought to have a two-to-three-fold more significant impact on students' performance on reading and math exams than any other school component, including buildings, resources, and leadership (Opper, 2019). Many studies show that teachers intensify their teaching work in the first years. Beginning teachers often quickly improve classroom management, curriculum implementation, and instructional strategies that lead to student achievement.

Rice (2010) used longitudinal data across many states to investigate whether children achieved better when taught by more experienced teachers and the link between the teachers' experience and productivity. The researcher found that teachers' advancement from their first-year reading is linked to the most significant increase in math proficiency attributable to their expertise. The researcher observed that the most significant gain in math achievement attributed to teacher experience is associated with teachers' progression from their first-year reading (Rice, 2010). When analyzing student test results from grades fourth through eighth, the researcher found that teachers with less

experience scored the same as some of their more experienced colleagues. Teachers at high-poverty schools are more likely to be those with three or fewer years of experience since they are less successful overall. During their first few years on the job, teachers have the most productivity improvements; after that, their performance tends to level out.

In contrast, Zhang (2008) investigated how three key factors—teacher education level, teaching experience, and teaching behaviors—impact students' performance in science subjects. The study examines the connection between teacher education levels, including advanced degrees and those specifically related to science, and their influence on student science achievement. It explores the role of teaching experience and whether more experienced teachers tend to produce better results. It also assesses if there is a point at which additional experience ceases to improve student outcomes significantly. The research evaluates a range of teaching behaviors, including classroom management, instructional strategies, and teacher-student interactions, to determine their impact on student science achievement. The results suggest that teacher education level does have a modest positive effect on student science achievement. The particular kind of degree, though, does not seem to matter all that much. Teaching experience plays a role; more experienced teachers lead to improved student outcomes. However, there is a point of diminishing returns for highly experienced teachers. The research underscores the significance of effective classroom management and instructional strategies regarding teaching behaviors. Positive teacher-student interactions and engaging teaching methods are linked to enhanced student performance in science. In conclusion, this article highlights how teacher education level, teaching experience, and teaching behaviors collectively influence students' science achievement to varying degrees.

Papay and Kraft (2014) delved into the connection between teaching experience and productivity within the teacher labor market. It grapples with the challenges of measuring this link accurately and introduces fresh evidence regarding the long-term career progression of teachers. The study scrutinizes the widely held belief that teachers become more effective as they accumulate experience in the classroom. It underscores the importance of considering numerous factors that can influence this connection, including changes in teacher quality over time and variations in teaching assignments. The research employs an extensive dataset that tracks teacher performance over numerous years, allowing for a more intricate analysis. It utilizes advanced statistical techniques to mitigate potential biases. The outcomes confirm a positive impact between experience and teacher productivity, yet this relationship is unique across all educators. Some teachers consistently enhance their effectiveness over time, while others reach a plateau or even experience a decline. The study underscores the significance of offering continuous professional development opportunities to teachers, aiding them in maintaining and augmenting their effectiveness throughout their careers. It also stresses the need to consider individual teacher attributes and circumstances when evaluating their performance.

Teachers' Years of Experience and Student Social Behaviors

Students' perceptions of teachers play a significant role in the classroom. If the students favor the teacher assigned, they are most likely to behave respectfully in their presence. The social behaviors of the teachers are inadvertently inflicted on their students. How the teachers manage their classrooms, interact and engage with their students, and interrelate with their coworkers is noteworthy to how students associate their behaviors

with others. First-year (novice) teachers typically struggle with the behaviors of their students. They are working to ensure they manage time by effectively teaching content, grading assignments, and submitting grades on time. It is important to note that classroom management is a continuous learning process and that teachers make efforts each school year. As teachers grow in their careers with their content knowledge, they learn to apply new behavior interventions within the classroom. The social dynamics of students are influenced by the classroom environment, the teacher's ability to manage their time well, the positive and negative affirmations, and the quality of their feedback. Tenured teachers are very subjective about students' social behaviors and do not communicate their opinions to their peers. More experienced educators were better at deciphering the motivations and factors influencing students' conduct (Terada, 2021).

Research studies show that support from the teacher was discovered to be a powerful predictor of academic behavior in positive teacher-student relationships. Groeschl and Wetenkamp (2004) surveyed experienced (five years or more) and inexperienced (college students participating in student teaching assignments) teachers. The experienced teachers were comprised of 36 elementary teachers and 39 secondary teachers. The focus of this study was to determine if teacher gender, years of experience, and grade level taught impacted their rating on student behaviors. Each teacher was presented with four stereotypical scenarios of student behavior. The results indicate that the student's gender did not play a role in the rating of the behaviors. However, the length of teacher experience and the grade level the teacher taught significantly affected the ratings. The researchers believe that teachers may be treating children fairly. The study concluded that elementary education teachers judged behaviors less acceptable than

secondary teachers. An annual report completed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) compiled a study using various countries to determine how they manage classroom behaviors. This survey presented differentials based on the teacher's year of experience. Teachers with three years or less experience presented lower percentages than those with three to nine years of experience. The study concludes that there was no measurable difference by gender or highest level of formal education completed in the percentages of teachers who reported being able to manage student behaviors (NCES, 2020).

According to the 2018 report, 93 percent of lower secondary teachers in public schools in the United States said they could set expectations for their student's behavior, 88 percent said they could get their students to follow the rules, 85 percent said they could manage disruptive behavior in the classroom, and 80 percent said they could quiet a rowdy or noisy student (NCES, 2020).

Ladd and Sorensen (2015) examined middle school teachers' effectiveness based on their years of experience. This study focused highly on a policy debate in North Carolina. The debaters believed that regardless of how effective they may eventually become, novice teachers are typically less effective than their counterparts who have more experience (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015). The researchers decided to utilize middle school teachers because of the complexity of instructing students cognitively, socio-emotionally, and biologically. The data was obtained from the North Carolina Education Research Data Center, which included information from 6th- 8th grade students from 2006-2011. They sought to "determine how one characteristic of teachers, namely years of experience, affects their ability to improve the test scores of their students or change

their behavior in desirable ways" (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015). The results showed positive results for student behaviors, with an apparent behavioral effect emerging from a reduction in student absenteeism (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015). The years 21–27 of teaching were the most productive for teachers regarding reducing student conduct and improving classroom management.

Teachers' Years of Experience and Student Socioemotional Development

Accumulating years of experience can contribute to the enhancement of teacher-student relationships. Seasoned educators frequently possess superior interpersonal abilities that facilitate meaningful emotional connections with their students. These constructive teacher-student bonds, in turn, have the potential to support the social and emotional growth of the students. There is an expectation that experienced teachers are often positive role models for students. The effectiveness of teaching and the methods employed by an educator are frequently more pivotal than merely the years of experience. A highly skilled new teacher can offer superior social-emotional assistance compared to a less effective teacher with more years in the profession.

Oberie et al. (2020) analyzed the connection between teacher burnout and how students perceive their teachers' social-emotional competence. The study investigates whether students recognize signs of stress and burnout in their teachers and their impact on student perspectives. In addition, with collected research data from teachers and students, the research analyzes the levels of teacher burnout and how students perceive their teachers' social-emotional skills. The results indicate that students can discern when their teachers are experiencing burnout. In cases where teachers report higher levels of burnout, students tend to form less favorable opinions about their teachers' emotional

competence. This study suggests that teacher burnout may indirectly affect students' well-being and classroom experiences by influencing how they perceive their teachers' emotional abilities. The implications of these findings stress the significance of addressing teacher burnout not just for the sake of educators' mental health but also for cultivating a positive classroom environment and enhancing students' educational encounters.

Gleannie et al. (2017) carried out focus group research on students' social and emotional growth. Many educators conveyed the necessity, significance, and impact of instructors' ability to influence students' socio-emotional development. A selected group of people who were chosen as "State and National Teachers of the Year and Finalists for State Teacher of the Year" participated. The focus group study interviewed participants from various locations, and here are several of the significant contributions they provided: Teachers say that allowing pupils to retake assignments, exams, or quizzes will improve their learning persistence. Students form close relationships with peers, instructors, and other adults. Teachers must exhibit strong social and emotional competencies so students may interact with and learn from them. The relationships between teachers and students greatly aid the development of social and emotional skills in kids. Some children might need more help than a teacher can offer, especially if they need mental health treatment. By asking about the students about their needs, having lunch together, and encouraging students to express their learning goals in class, teachers can develop relationships with their students. Teachers concur that focusing on social-emotional learning and professional development in this domain is crucial. In summary, when students see a caring, enthusiastic, helpful, and welcoming teacher, their sense of belonging to the

school improves. Bowen (2021) adds that pupils with a sense of community at school are more enthusiastic, focused, and willing to participate in class again. However, students who feel a sense of belonging often struggle to devote their complete cognitive resources to task and experience issues with emotional wellness. Students being provided with a sense of belonging is a natural trait and human need. Federici and Skaalvik (2013) communicate that students need to feel that their teachers care about them and their achievement to engage in learning activities and perform at their best.

Teachers' Years of Experience and Student Absenteeism

More research must be conducted on the teachers' years of experience and student absenteeism. Lower absenteeism rates may result from more experienced teachers' development of effective teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and rapport with their students. Proficiency teachers often can effectively engage students, increasing the likelihood of regular attendance. Stronger ties between tenured teachers and the community, parents, and students may have a positive impact on attendance. If a student and teacher get along well, they may feel more engaged in the classroom and more inclined to attend classes regularly.

More tenured teachers have typically refined their techniques over time, which may lead to more engaging and effective lessons. Students may be more inclined to attend if they believe they are learning and making progress in their classes. The school environment, including school culture, leadership, resources, and support networks for teachers and students, may also affect the relationship between teacher experience and absenteeism.

There is a prevalent focus on teacher absenteeism and its impact on student absenteeism (Clotfelter et al., 2009; Joseph et al., 2014; Sparks, 2022). Studies show that teacher experience can decrease absenteeism, provide mentorship for less-experienced teachers, and be standardized (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Students with more experienced teachers do better on standardized tests and have higher attendance rates and other success metrics (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Beyond test scores, educators affect student outcomes, including discipline rates, absenteeism, noncognitive skills, and college attendance. Students who miss a lot of classes run the risk of failing them, losing interest in their studies, and dropping out of high school (Hansen & Quintero, 2020). To teach and learn, both teachers and students need to be present in the classroom (Kostner, 2016). When students and teachers are absent from school, regardless of the reasons for the absences, it presents significant barriers to equitable and practical instruction, undermining stable learning environments and inhibiting student success (Knoster, 2016). Absences lower students' self-efficacy, motivation to learn, and social engagement in addition to lowering test scores, grades, and on-time graduation (Gottfried, 2022).

Gershenson (2016) thoroughly explores the intricate dynamics among teacher quality, student attendance, and student achievement within the K-12 education context. The results suggest a strong relationship between teacher quality and student attendance. Students have better attendance records when taught by quality teachers. In addition, teacher quality and student attendance significantly affect students' academic success, and high-quality teacher and consistent attendance improve learning outcomes. The study highlights the critical role of teacher quality in promoting students' regular attendance and academic success. Effective teaching practices, supportive classrooms, and positive

teacher-student relationships are critical factors in this relationship. In addition, the study highlights the importance of policy initiatives and interventions that prioritize teacher quality and encourage regular student attendance to improve overall student achievement. When educators and school administrators treat their children with empathy and uplift, they establish a favorable climate for building meaningful relationships with the school. In addition to recognizing and empathizing with students' academic demands, this empathic method entails recognizing and understanding their emotions, obstacles, and unique circumstances. By recognizing their pupils' distinct experiences and viewpoints, teachers may build rapport and trust, fostering a feeling of inclusion and togetherness in the school community.

Moreover, when educators and administrators have an optimistic mindset, they model optimism and resilience in pupils. A positive school climate encourages students to actively engage in their studies, fostering a welcoming and inclusive school culture. Research shows that there should be a focus on teacher absences, not just the students (Hansen & Quintero, 2020; Miller, 2012; Bidwell, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics has released new statistics showing that chronic absenteeism among teachers and pupils increased in the 2021–22 school year when compared to the previous year and before the epidemic (Sparks, 2022).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology discussed in this chapter addressed the suggested research questions and defined the design that was suitable for this empirical study. This study was designed to identify special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. The survey will reflect the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of the teachers in suburban schools during the 2019-2022 school years. Specifically, this study was concerned with the predictability of special education teacher demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, and years of experience) and student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socio-emotional development, and absenteeism) among K-12 students. This chapter consisted of ten major sections: 1.) type of research design; 2.) population and research setting 3.) instrumentation; 4.) validity and reliability of the instrument; 5.) sampling procedures; 6.) data collection and analysis; 7.) null hypotheses; 8.) independent and dependent variables; 9.) statistical analysis; and 10.) testing of statistical assumptions.

Research Design

A 2x2x2 factorial design was used in this study. Factorial designs are a form of true experiment, where multiple factors (the researcher-controlled independent variables) are manipulated or allowed to vary, and they provide researchers with two main advantages (Juillion, 2019). First, they allow researchers to simultaneously examine the main effects of two or more individual independent variables. Second, they allow researchers to detect interactions among variables (Wright & London, 2009).

Population and Research Setting

Teachers of special education and general education in grades K–12 who worked during COVID-19 were the study's target population. Teachers of special and general education at a school district in the southern region of the United States are the chosen group for this study. Participants in the selection process must be employed teachers who worked in COVID-19 (2019–2022) school years. To conduct research through the selected school district, the researcher had to fill out an application. To obtain district approval beforehand, the researcher had to correspond with the campus principals while completing the application. Following acceptance from the campus principals, the researcher was notified that the application had been approved and recommended to contact campus sponsors and principals to release information to the instructors on their campus. The researcher sent an email detailing the survey's requirements and the study's duration. To conduct this study, various campuses from elementary, middle, and high schools were used. The selected school district serves almost 120,000 students with diverse populations. Approximately 46 percent of students identify as Hispanic, 21 percent as African American, 19 percent as Caucasian, and 10 percent are Asian. About 20 percent of the students are emergent bilinguals and almost 60 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged. Almost 13 percent of the students are receiving special education services ranging from early childhood to twelfth grade. As of the 2022–2023 academic year, the following demographics make up teachers: around 20.8 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 57.6 percent are Caucasian, 16.4 percent are African American, 0.3% are American Indian, and 3.2% are Asian. There are 21.6% of male teachers and 78.4% of female teachers in the group. The years of experience of the teachers are as follows:

9.5% are first-time educators, 26.2% have worked as teachers for one to five years, 22.5% for six to ten years, and 41.7% have worked as teachers for eleven years or more.

School A: The educational institution in focus operates as a Title I elementary school, dedicated to educating students spanning from Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. Notably, the student body is characterized by its diverse composition, with over 40 percent identifying as Hispanic, approximately 30 percent as African American, and close to 10 percent as Caucasian. Delving into the faculty demographics, the distribution reveals a varied landscape, encompassing 19.3% African American teachers, 36.7% Hispanic instructors, 40.8% Caucasian educators, and 1.5% of Asian descent. Gender representation among the teaching staff is predominantly female, constituting 95% of the total, with the remaining 5.0% being male. Moreover, the spectrum of teaching experience is delineated as follows: 33.6% are categorized as beginning teachers, 14.9% possess 1-5 years of teaching experience, 21.0% have garnered 6-10 years of experience, and a notable 30.5% boast 11 years of teaching experience or more.

School B: The educational institution in focus is an elementary school catering to students ranging from Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. Notably, the student body presents a diverse demographic, with over 40 percent identifying as Hispanic, over 10 percent as African American, approximately 34 percent as Caucasian, and about 9 percent as Asian. Examining the composition of the teaching staff, the demographic breakdown reveals a distribution of 2.7% African American instructors, 18.9% Hispanic educators, 74.3% Caucasian teachers, and 2.7% Asian faculty members. Gender-wise, the faculty is predominantly female, accounting for 94.6% of the total, while males constitute 5.4%. Furthermore, the tenure of teaching experience among staff members is distributed

as follows: 4.1% classified as beginning teachers, 23.0% possess 1-5 years of experience, 23.0% with 6-10 years of experience, and a significant 40.0% boast 11 or more years of teaching experience.

School C: The educational institution in focus is a Title I elementary school, catering to students from Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. The student body is predominantly comprised of Hispanic students, constituting 60 percent of the total enrollment, followed by approximately 25 percent African American students and just under 5 percent Caucasian students. In terms of the faculty composition, the demographic breakdown reveals that 25.3% of teachers are African American, 38.5% are Hispanic, 29.5% are White, and 3.4% are Asian. Moreover, the gender distribution among faculty members demonstrates that 93.3% are female, while 6.7% are male. As for teaching experience, 9.9% of instructors are classified as beginning teachers, 32.0% possess 1-5 years of experience, 33.7% have 6-10 years of experience, and 22.4% boast over 11 years of teaching experience.

School D: The educational institution under analysis operates as a middle school, catering to students in grades 6 through 8. The student body reflects a diverse demographic composition, with approximately 30% identifying as Hispanic, about 25% as African American, 21% as Caucasian, and 19% as Asian. Examining the ethnic makeup of the teaching staff reveals that 24.7% are African American, 12.3% are Hispanic, 59.3% are Caucasian, and 2.5% are Asian. Gender distribution among faculty members indicates that 74.3% are female, while 25.7% are male. Furthermore, when considering the tenure of teaching experience, the breakdown is as follows: 9.8% classified as beginning teachers, 18.4% possess 1-5 years of experience, 16.5% with 6-10

years of experience, and a significant 55.4% boast 11 or more years of teaching experience.

School E: The educational institution in focus is a Title I middle school, dedicated to educating students from 6th to 8th grade. The student body presents a diverse demographic landscape, with approximately 40% identifying as Hispanic, around 33% as African American, roughly 12% as Caucasian, and 8% as Asian. Examining the composition of the teaching staff reveals a multifaceted representation, with 41.2% being African American, 14.6% Hispanic, 38.1% Caucasian, 1.0% American Indian, and 1.0% Asian. Gender distribution among faculty members indicates that 37.2% are male, while 62.8% are female. Moreover, analyzing the spectrum of teaching experience, it is delineated as follows: 16.4% categorized as beginning teachers, 29.6% possess 1-5 years of experience, 23.4% with 6-10 years of experience, and a notable 30.6% boast 11 years or more of teaching experience.

School F: This campus is a Title I middle school serving students in grades 6 through 8. Approximately 57% of the student population identifies as Hispanic, while about 28% are African American. The Caucasian and Asian populations combined constitute less than 12% of the student body. In terms of teacher demographics, the breakdown is as follows: 40.4% are African American, 13.1% are Hispanic, 41.7% are White/Caucasian, and 2.4% are Asian. Females represent 74.5% of the teaching staff, with males comprising the remaining 25.5%. Regarding experience levels, 23.5% of teachers are classified as beginning, 36.7% have 1 to 5 years of experience, 22.5% have 6 to 10 years of experience, and 26.3% have 11 or more years of experience.

School G: This campus only serves students who receive special education services for social, emotional, and behavioral support. Due to the imminent and constant transition of students placed on the campus, the enrollment numbers are not stable or consistent enough to provide.

School H: This campus caters to high school students from grades 9 through 12. Over 60% of the student body identifies as Hispanic, with approximately 11% as African American, Asian, and Caucasian students each comprising 10% of the population. Examining the teacher demographics, 9.4% are African American, 15.8% are Hispanic, 68.1% are White/Caucasian, 0.5% are American Indian, and 4.4% are Asian. Female teachers make up 63.1% of the staff, while males account for 36.9%.
Regarding teaching experience, 8.6% are categorized as beginning teachers, 24.0% have 1-5 years of experience, 24.5% have 6-10 years of experience, and a significant 42.8% have 11 years or more of teaching experience.

School I: This high school campus serves students in grades 9 through 12. The student population makeup consists of approximately 58% Hispanic students, 27% African American students, 6% Caucasian students, and 6% Asian students. Regarding teacher demographics, 19.1% are African American, 17.4% are Hispanic, 55.2% are White/Caucasian, and 6.9% are Asian. In terms of gender distribution, 40.9% are males, and 59.1% are females. When considering teaching experience, 4.9% are categorized as beginning teachers, 24.7% have 1-5 years of experience, 22.5% have 6-10 years of experience, and 47.8% have 11 years or more of experience.

School J: This Title 1 school caters to high school students in grades 9 through 12. Approximately 58% of the student body identifies as Hispanic, while 29% are

African American, and Caucasian and Asian students each represent about 5% of the population. In terms of teacher demographics, 22.3% are African American, 20.7% are Hispanic, 49.8% are White, and 5.7% are Asian. The gender distribution among teachers is 43.6% males and 56.4% females. Regarding teaching experience, 7.7% are classified as beginning teachers, 31.9% have 1-5 years of experience, 26.8% have 6-10 years of experience, and 33.6% have 11 or more years of experience.

School K: This campus serves high school students in grades 9 through 12. The student population makeup comprises over 50% Hispanic, over 18% African American, about 17% Caucasian, and less than 10% Asian. Regarding teacher demographics, 13.7% are African American, 19.6% are Hispanic, 61.5% are white, and 4.7% are Asian. Gender-wise, 37.9% are males, and 62.1% are females. In terms of teaching experience, 7.0% are beginning teachers, 18.9% have 1–5 years of experience, 28.6% have 6–10 years of experience, and 45.6% have 11 or more years of experience.

Instrumentation

This research study used one survey which the researcher created. The Dixon Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding Student Outcomes (DASETSO) questionnaire consists of 45 questions that relate to student outcomes during the COVID-19 experience. The teachers eligible to complete the survey were asked questions about their demographics and student outcomes as measured by academic achievement, social behaviors, socio-emotional development, and absenteeism. Nine of the questions are related to teacher demographics; ten questions are related to student academic achievement; nine of the questions are related to student social behaviors; nine questions are related to student socioemotional development; and the last eight questions are related

to student absenteeism. The items on the DASETSO require the special education teachers in the study to check one of five fixed expressions: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The fixed expressions were assigned the following weights for analysis purposes: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

Validity of the Instrument

In this study, three key demographic factors of teachers were investigated: ethnicity, gender, and years of experience. Ethnicity, gender identification, and years of experience were self-reported by teachers based on survey demographics. Years of experience were calculated based on the total number of years each teacher had been in service, including both their overall teaching experience and their specific years in the current school. For student success factors, academic achievement was measured using teachers' grading of students' standardized test scores, GPA, and grades in specific subjects. Social behaviors were assessed through participation levels, interactions with peers, and disciplinary incidents. Socioemotional development was evaluated based on indicators of emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills, as reported by teachers and school counselors. Absenteeism was defined as full-day absences and tardiness records.

The extent to which a test assesses a targeted content area is known as content validity. Item validity and sampling validity are both necessary for content validity (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). It involves a thorough examination of the instrument's items to ensure they represent the entire content domain and capture all relevant aspects of the concept being studied. The process of establishing content validity often begins with a

careful review of the existing literature and consultation with subject matter experts to identify key components and essential elements of the construct.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish internal consistency, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In order to quantify the internal consistency of a test or scale, Lee Cronbach created alpha in 1951. Alpha is represented as a number between 0 and 1. (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). By comparing the amount of shared variance, or covariance, among the items that make up an instrument to the amount of overall variance, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient can be used to evaluate reliability (Collins, 2007). The main application of Cronbach's coefficient alpha is to characterize the dependability of multiitem scales. (DeVellis, 2005).

Sampling Procedure

The researcher sought to obtain data from eleven schools from the selected district. Four of the schools are high schools, three are elementary schools, three are middle or junior high schools, and one is a specialty school that only serves students with disabilities (SWDs). Teachers classified as special education and general education could complete the survey. General education teachers were comprised of teachers of record for any core or elective classes. Special education teachers were anyone classified as In-Class Support, Life Skills, Adaptive Behavior, Developmental, and or any title for a specialized program serving students with disabilities (SWDs). Participants were asked to select their content classification during the COVID-19 pandemic that spanned from the 2019-2022 school year. The special education teachers selected for this study were stratified according to the independent variables (gender, ethnicity, and years of

experience). Special education teachers were categorized in the eight (8) subgroups based on three independent variables. First, the special education teachers were divided into groups based on their gender (male and female). Secondly, according to their ethnicity (minority and non-minority). Thirdly, the special education teachers were classified into two groups with regard to years of experience (14 years or less and 15 years or above). A total number of 80 special education teachers were randomly selected to participate in this study. This process involved an equal number of participants, ten (10) special education teachers were randomly selected for each subgroup. The sample was stratified into the following eight categories based on the special education teachers gender, ethnicity, and years of experience:

1. Ten (10) special education minority male teachers with 14 years or less of experience.
2. Ten (10) special education minority female teachers with 14 years or less of experience.
3. Ten (10) special education non-minority male teachers with 14 years or less of experience.
4. Ten (10) special education non-minority female teachers with 14 years or less of experience.
5. Ten (10) special education minority male teachers with 15 years or more of experience.
6. Ten (10) special education minority female teachers with 15 years or more of experience.

7. Ten (10) special education non-minority male teachers with 15 years or more of experience.
8. Ten (10) special education non-minority female teachers with 15 years or more of experience.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sought permission to conduct a study within the selected school district. They were responsible for liaising with different principals to inform them about the research's purpose and secure approval for conducting the study on their respective campuses. Once the necessary signatures have been obtained and submitted, the district will grant the researcher permission to commence the study. The study focuses on gathering data from two groups: special education teachers who instructed K-12 students during COVID-19 and general education teachers who instructed K-12 students with and without assistance from special education teachers or aides during COVID-19. The research delves explicitly into the attitudes of special education teachers regarding student outcomes. External data unrelated to this study's focus was not collected or retrieved. The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms. In addition to seeking permission from school principals, the researcher ensured that all participating teachers were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and rights as participants. Each teacher was required to consent before participating in the research, emphasizing the importance of informed and voluntary participation throughout the study.

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this investigation:

Ho_1: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the academic achievement component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Ho_2: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the social behavior component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Ho_3: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the socioemotional development component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Ho_4: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the absenteeism component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variables for this empirical study were teacher's demographic factors (gender, ethnicity, and years of experience). The dependent variables were (academic achievement, social behaviors, socio-emotional development, and absenteeism).

Statistical Analysis

Three-way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the hypothesis. The three-way ANOVA is used by statisticians to determine whether there is a three-way relationship among variables on an outcome (Anderson, 2021). It helped the researcher understand complex interactions where multiple variables may influence the result. Furthermore, if a difference was found between the sample means, the researcher used Scheffe' Post Hoc Test, a multiple comparison tests, to determine whether the difference was statistically significant or whether it could be attributed to random sampling fluctuation (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003). The hypotheses stated in the study were analyzed at the .05 level or better.

Testing of Statistical Assumptions

The following assumptions are associated with the Three-Way Analysis Variance:

1. Normal Distribution refers to the numerical scores on the dependent variable being normally distributed in the population. This assumption was tested with the Shapiro-Wilk procedure and found to be tenable.
2. Homogeneity of Variances- refers to the score distribution of the dependent variable, which must have equal variances.
3. Independent Samples refer to instances in which the observations within each sample must be randomly sampled and must be independent of one another.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of special education teachers toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. More specifically, this study was concerned with the effects of special education teachers' gender, ethnicity, and years of experience independent and combined on their attitudes regarding the effect of COVID-19 on four components of student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism). Answers to the following questions were sought.

1. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the academic achievement component of student outcomes?
2. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the social behavior component of student outcomes?
3. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the socioemotional development component of student outcomes?
4. To what extent, if any, do the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separate and combined, have on special education teachers' attitudes toward the absenteeism component of student outcomes?

The sample for this empirical investigation consisted of eighty (80) special education teachers employed in a suburban school district in the southern region of the United States. The data analysis for this investigation was accomplished under three major areas. The first section of this chapter addresses the demographic profile of the special education teachers who participated in the investigation. The second section provided an analysis of the four statistical (null) hypotheses generated in this investigation. The third and final section of the data analysis entertained the summary of the four null hypotheses treated in the study. The Three-Way Analysis of Variance and the Scheffe Multiple comparison statistical techniques were utilized to analyze the data. All four statistical hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance or better.

Demographic and Job-Related Profile of Participants in the Study

There were eighty (80) special education teachers, ten (10) from each of the eight samples (cells) generated in the study. The teachers who were randomly selected from each sample were described statistically by their gender, ethnicity, years of experience, age level of education, and grade level.

Gender. Forty or 50% percent of the special education were females. By contrast, 40 or 50% percent were males. See Table 1 for these results.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Gender

Variable	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	40	50
Female	40	50
Total	80	100

Ethnicity. Regarding the variable ethnicity, there were 40 or 50 percent of the special education teachers who identified their ethnic status as minority. In comparison, 40 to 50 of the special education teachers reported their ethnic identity as non-minority. See Table 2 for these analyses.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Ethnicity

Variable	Number	Percent
Ethnicity		
Minority	40	50
Non-Minority	40	50
Total	80	100

Years of Experience. The variable years of experience were measured in two categories. There were 40 or 50 percent of the special education teachers who indicated they had 14 years of experience or less. Likewise, 40 or 50 percent of the special education teachers revealed that they had 15 years or more of experience. See Table 3 for these findings.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Years of Experience

Variable	Number	Percent
Years of Experience		
14 years or less	40	50
15 years or more	40	50
Total	80	100

Age. For this study, age was classified into three categories. 22 or 27.5 percent of the special education teachers acknowledged that their age was between 26 and 35, and 27 or 33.8 percent reported their age was between 36 and 45. Finally, 31 or 38.8 percent of special education teachers expressed their age was 46 years or older. See Table 4 for these results.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Age

Variable	Number	Percent
Age		
26-35	22	27.5
36-45	27	33.8
46 or older	31	38.8
Total	80	100

Level of Education. The variable level of education was categorized into three groups for this study. There were 46 or 57.5 percent of the special education teachers who indicated they had received a Bachelor's degree. On the other hand, 31 or 38.8 percent of the special education teachers reported they had received a Master's degree. Finally, 3 or 3.8 percent of the special education teachers acknowledged they had received the Doctorate. See Table 5 for these analyses.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Education

Variable	Number	Percent
Level of Education		
Bachelors	46	57.5
Masters	31	38.8
Doctorate	3	3.8
Total	80	100

Grade Level. The variable grade level was divided into three distinct categories for this empirical investigation. There were 12 or 15 percent of the special education teachers who were teaching on the elementary level and 10 or 12.5 percent of them were teaching on the middle school level. Finally, 58 or 72.5 percent of the special education teachers were teaching at the high school level. See Table 6 for these results.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Participants by Grade Level

Variable	Number	Percent
Grade Level		
Elementary	12	15.0
Middle	10	12.5
High School	58	72.5
Total	80	100

Examination of Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of special education teachers towards the academic achievement component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Table 7 shows the three-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) completed for special education teachers' attitudes regarding the academic achievement component of student outcomes. There was no statistically significant difference found between the two gender groups. "A" main effect ($F(1, 72) = .501$, $p>.05$), the two ethnic groups. "B" main effect ($F(1,72) = 2.573$, $p>.05$) and the two years of experience groups ($F(1,71) = 1.745$, $p>.05$).

Additionally, the results of the Analysis of Variance did show significant interaction between the special education teachers' gender and ethnicity, A x B ($F(1,72) = 4.709$, $o<.05$). However, the teachers' gender and years of experience, B x C ($F(1,72) = .501$, $p>.05$) were found not to significantly interact. In addition, the joint effects on the three variables – gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, A x B x C ($F(1,72) = .109$, $p>.05$) on the attitudes of special education teachers toward the academic achievement component of student outcomes were found not to be statistically significant.

Further data analysis using the Scheffe Test (See Table 8) was used to determine the mean difference between the four groups of special education teachers by gender and ethnicity. Minority male special education teachers on the average had significantly higher attitude scores than their minority female counterparts with regards to the

academic performance component of student outcomes. No other mean differences were observed.

Table 7

Three-way ANOVA Results Regarding the Differences in the Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding Academic Achievement Component of Student Outcomes by Gender, Ethnicity and Years of Experience

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Main Effect					
(A)Gender	11.250	1	11.250	.501	.481
(B)Ethnicity	57.800	1	57.800	2.573	.113
(C)Years	39.200	1	39.200	1.795	.191
A x B	105.800	1	105.800	4.709	.033*
A x C	.200	1	.200	.009	.925
B x C	11.250	1	11.250	.501	.481
A x B x C	2.450	1	2.450	.109	.792
Within Groups	1617.600	72	22.460		
Total	1845.550	79			

*Significant at the .05 level

Table 8

Results of the Scheffé Test for the Two-Way Interaction Between Gender and Ethnicity: Academic Achievement

Mean 1	Mean 2	Mean 3	Mean 4	Observed Mean Difference
Minority Males	Non-Minority Males	Minority Females	Non-Minority Females	
30.45	28.45			2.00
30.45		27.40		3.05*
30.45			28.00	2.45
	28.45	27.40		1.05
	28.45		28.00	.45
		27.40	28.00	-.60

*Significant at the .05 level, Scheffe' Critical Value= 2.98

Ho_2: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the social behavior component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Shown in Table 9 were the Analysis of Variance results for the gender, ethnicity, and years of experience of special education teachers on their attitudes toward the social behavior component of student outcomes. The difference found in the attitudes of the gender groups, "A" main effect ($F(1,72) = 1.546$, $p>.05$), the ethnic groups, "B" main

effect (F (1,72) = .111, p>.05) and the years of experience groups, “C” main effect (F(1,72) = .670, p>.05) were not significant at the .05 level.

Moreover, gender and ethnicity, A x B (F(1,72) = 1.259, p>.05), gender and years of experience, A x C (F(1,72) = 1.399, p>.05), ethnic and years of experience, B x C (F(1,72) = .575, p>.05) and gender, ethnicity and years of experience, A x B x C (F(1,27) = .266, p>.05) did not significantly interact, and thus did not provide an effect on the attitudes of special education teachers toward the social behavior component of student outcomes.

Table 9

Three-way ANOVA Results Regarding the Difference in the Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding the Social Behavior Component of Student Outcomes by Gender, Ethnicity and Years of Experience

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Main Effect					
(A)Gender	21.013	1	21.013	1.546	.218
(B)Ethnicity	1.513	1	1.513	.111	.740
(C)Years	9.113	1	9.113	.670	.416
A x B	17.113	1	17.113	1.259	.266
A x C	19.013	1	19.013	1.399	.241
B x C	7.813	1	7.813	.575	.451
A x B x C	3.613	1	3.613	.266	.792608
Within Groups	978.700	72	13.593		
Total	1057.887	79			

Ho_3: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the socioemotional development component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

In Table 10, the separate and combined effects of special education teachers' gender, ethnicity, and years of experience on their attitudes with regard to the socioemotional development component of student outcomes. As shown in this table, there were no statistically significant differences found between the attitudes of the two gender groups, "A" main effect ($F(1,72) = 1.471$, $p>.05$), two ethnic groups, "B" main effect ($F(1,72) = .904$, $p>.05$) and the years of experience groups, "C" main effect ($F(1,72) = .616$, $p>.05$) regarding the socioemotional development component. Additionally, no statistically significant interaction effects were found between the special education teachers' gender and ethnicity, A x B ($F(1,72) = .274$, $p>.05$), gender and years of experience, A x C ($F(1,72) = .792$, $p>.05$), ethnic and years of experience, B x C ($F(1,72) = .395$, $p>.05$) and gender, ethnicity and years of experience, A x B x C ($F(1,27) = .731$, $p>.05$) concerning their attitudes toward the socioemotional development component of student outcomes.

Table 10

Three-way ANOVA Results Regarding the Difference in the Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding the Socioemotional Development Component of Student Outcomes by Gender, Ethnicity and Years of Experience

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Main Effect					
(A)Gender	966.050	1	966.050	1.471	.229
(B)Ethnicity	594.050	1	594.050	.904	.345
(C)Years	405.000	1	405.000	.616	.435
A x B	162.450	1	162.450	.247	.621
A x C	520.200	1	520.200	.792	.377
B x C	259.200	1	259.200	.359	.532
A x B x C	480.200	1	480.200	.731	.795
Within Groups	47300.400	72	656.950		
Total	50687.550	79			

Ho_4: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of special education teachers towards the absenteeism component of student outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, nor the interaction effect of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Presented in Table 11 was the Three-Way Analysis of Variance results pertaining to independent and combined effects of special education teachers' gender, ethnicity, and

years of experience on their attitudes with regard to the absenteeism component of student outcomes. The differences found in the attitudes of the two ethnic groups, “B” main effect ($F(1,72) = 6.493$, $p<.05$) of teachers were significant at the .05 level. Nevertheless, the attitudes of the two gender groups, “A” main effect ($F(1,72) = .014$, $p>.05$) and two years of experience groups, “C” main effect ($F(1.72) = 1.992$, $p>.05$) was found not to be regarding the absenteeism component of student outcomes.

Moreover, significant two-way interaction effects were not found between gender and ethnicity, A x B ($F(1,72) = 2.711$, $p>.05$), gender and years of experience, A x C ($F(1,72) = 2.583$, $p>.05$), and ethnicity and years of experience, B x C ($F(1,72) = 2.337$, $p>.05$) regarding special education teachers’ attitudes towards the absenteeism component. Also, the first-order interaction effects of the special education teachers’ gender, ethnicity, and years of experience on their attitudes with regard to the absenteeism component of student outcomes were not statistically significant ($F(1,72) = .025$, $p>.05$) at the .05 level.

Table 11

Three-way ANOVA Results Regarding the Difference in the Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding Absenteeism Component of Student Outcomes by Gender, Ethnicity and Years of Experience

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Main Effect					
(A)Gender	.450	1	.450	.019	.907
(B)Ethnicity	211.250	1	211.250	6.493	.013*
(C)Years	64.800	1	64.800	1.992	.162
A x B	88.200	1	88.200	.2.711	.104
A x C	84.050	1	84.050	2.583	.112
B x C	76.050	1	76.050	2.337	.131
A x B x C	.800	1	.800	.025	.876
Within Groups	2342.600	72	32.536		
Total	2868.200	79			

*Significant at the .05 level

Further data analysis using the mean results indicated that minority special education teachers had a more favorable attitude toward the absenteeism component of student outcomes than non-minority special education teachers. (See Table 12 for these results).

Table 12

Mean Results Regarding Teachers' Attitudes Towards Absenteeism

Ethnicity	Mean	Standard Deviation
Minority	24.28*	5.03
Non-Minority	21.02	6.02

*Highest Mean

Additional Analysis. The following analyses were generated regarding the impact of the variable type of instruction groups associated with special education teachers regarding student outcome components.

Shown in Table 13 is the One-Way Analysis of Variance results pertaining to the attitudes of teachers regarding the academic achievement component of student outcomes. As shown in this table, no statistically significant differences were found between the attitudes of teachers regarding the academic achievement component of student outcomes of three types of instruction groups of teachers at the .05 level ($F(2,77) = .371$, $p > .05$).

Table 13

Analysis of Summary Table Regarding Student Academic Achievement Component by Type of Instruction

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	17.622	2	8.811	.371	.691
Within Groups	1827.928	77	23.739		
Total	1845.550	79			

Presented in Table 14 were the ANOVA analyses regarding the attitudes of special education teachers toward the social behavior component of student outcomes. As revealed in this table, statistically significant differences were not found between the attitudes of three instruction groups ($F(2, 77) = .986$, $p > .05$) regarding the social behavior component of student outcomes at the .05 level.

Table 14

Analysis of Summary Table Regarding Student Social Behaviors Component by Type of Instruction

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between	26.417	2	13.209	.986	.378
Groups	1031.470	77	13.396		
Within Groups	1057.887	79			
Total					

Presented in Table 15 were the ANOVA analyses regarding the attitudes of special education teachers toward the socioemotional development component of student outcomes. As revealed in this table, statistically significant differences were not found between the attitudes of three instruction groups ($F(2, 77) = .203$, $p > .05$) with regard to the social behavior component of student outcomes at the .05 level.

Table 15

Analysis of Summary Table Regarding Student Socioemotional Development Component by Type of Instruction

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	265.629	2	132.815	.203	.817
Within Groups	50421.921	77	654.870		
Total	50687.550	79			

Illustrated in Table 16 were the One-Way Analyses of Variance results concerning the attitudes of special education teachers toward the student absenteeism component of student outcomes. A significant difference was not found to exist between the attitudes of the three instruction groups ($F(2, 77) = .444$, $p > .05$) about the student absenteeism component of student outcomes at the .05 level.

Table 16

Analysis of Summary Table Regarding Student Absenteeism Component by Type of Instruction

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	32.669	2	16.335	.444	.643
Within Groups	2835.531	77	36.825		
Total	2868.200	79			

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined special education teachers' attitudes toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes. The researcher examined the impact of teachers' gender, ethnicity, and years of experience on student outcomes as measured by academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional behaviors, and absenteeism.

The research design used in this study was a 2x2x2 factorial design. A Three-Way ANOVA was used to determine differences in student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism) by teachers' gender, ethnicity, and years of experience. Eighty (80) special education teachers were randomly selected to participate in the study. Additionally, the researcher developed a locally devised survey entitled the Dixon Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Regarding Student Outcomes (DASETSO).

The research prompted the following null hypotheses based on the research purpose and questions involved in the study: All four hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance or more. The study's results revealed the following findings:

1. The special education teacher demographic variables of gender and ethnicity were found to be statistically significant impact to students' academic achievement component of student outcomes.

2. Special education minority males were observed to have a more favorable attitude toward students' academic achievement component of student outcomes than minority females.
3. The teacher’s demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience presented no impact for students' social behavior component.
4. The teacher’s demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, and years of experience had no impact on the students' socioemotional development.
5. The special education teacher’s demographic ethnicity was found to be statistically significant influence on student absenteeism component.

Discussion

A significant finding from this research was that ethnicity impacted student outcomes in terms of academic achievement and absenteeism. Minority male and female teachers presented to associate a positive attitude about student academic achievement with a 3.05 mean difference. Minority male special education teachers, on average, had significantly higher attitude scores than their minority female counterparts concerning the academic performance component of student outcomes. The impact of ethnicity on student achievement is consistent with research conducted by Dee (2006) and Gerhenson (2021), where the researchers found a statistically significant relationship between teacher ethnicity and student academic achievement. The researcher was shocked to find a relationship between teacher ethnicity and student absenteeism. The various questions asked to the teacher reflect teacher absenteeism and tardiness toward student absenteeism. Minus-Vincent (2022) study correlates with the findings of this study and recognizes that a teacher's ethnicity significantly impacts student academic achievement

and student absenteeism. The researcher believes that teachers with shared ethnicity improve student grades and attendance.

Despite the lack of a statistically significant difference between gender and students' social behavior, the equal participation of male and female participants may have substantially impacted the outcomes. These findings did not correspond to prior research concerning this variable (Dee, 2006). One reason for these findings may be unaccounted circumstantial factors that influence student social behaviors such as cultural norms, environmental background, or the student personality characteristics. The researcher expected the teacher variables and student social behaviors to be relevant. The findings of this study were consistent with the findings of Chang and Davis (2006), who found no statistically significant relationship between teacher gender and student social behaviors but rather student's prior behavior, classroom context, and teacher emotional reactions. The teacher's years of experience did not effectively influence any variables related to student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism). This is consistent with the research conducted by Kini and Podolsky (2016) and Gleannie et al. (2017) but inconsistent with Ladd and Sorensen (2015) and Zhang (2008).

The researcher sought to find a significant differences between the groups. The secondary analysis conducted between the types of instruction grouping of special education teachers, general education teachers who received assistance, and general education teachers who did not receive assistance proved to show no significance between each other regarding student academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and student absenteeism.

Conclusions

Based on the findings generated from the data analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. It appeared that the attitudes of special education teachers regarding the academic achievement component of student outcomes were influenced by a combination of variables of gender and ethnicity.
2. In general, the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience independently had no impact on special education teachers' attitudes toward the academic achievement component of student outcomes.
3. Teachers' gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, separately and combined, had no significant influence on their attitudes regarding the social behavior component of student outcomes.
4. It appeared that the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience individually had no impact on the socio-emotional development component on student outcomes.
5. Regardless of the various combination effects on the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, these variables had no significant influence on the attitudes of special education teachers regarding the socio-emotional development component of student outcomes.
6. Minority special education teachers had significantly more favorable attitudes toward the absenteeism component of student outcomes.

7. The variables gender and years of experience had no effect on the attitudes of special education teachers regarding the absenteeism component of student outcomes.
8. Finally, the attitudes of special education teachers toward the absenteeism component of student outcomes were not influenced by the combination of the variables gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Implications

Notably, teacher demographics' influence on student outcomes might not function in a one-way-fits-all system. Rather, there may be complex relationships between various demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, and years of experience) that affect how well students perform academically and behave. These interactions could be examined in later research to get a more thorough understanding of their effects. The study's results pertaining to the impact of specific teacher demographics on student outcomes indicate that professional development initiatives and teacher training programs could gain from tackling matters concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion. Giving teachers training in inclusive teaching methods and cultural competency may enable them to better meet the various needs of their students. The finding that male members of special education minority groups demonstrated a more optimistic outlook regarding their academic achievement highlights the significance of implementing culturally sensitive teaching strategies. Teachers should be aware of cultural differences and use teaching methods to engage students from a variety of backgrounds to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. To effectively engage students from diverse backgrounds,

educators should be aware of cultural differences and incorporate culturally relevant instructional materials and teaching strategies.

The discovery that the ethnicity of special education teachers was linked to student absenteeism raises the possibility that teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds are better suited to recognize and address the causes of student absenteeism in their own communities. This emphasizes how crucial it is to build relationships between educators, learners, and families sensitive to cultural differences to increase student participation and attendance. Although the study concentrated on teacher demographics, it is important to understand that a wide range of factors outside the classroom, such as socioeconomic status, family dynamics, and community resources, impact student outcomes. Later investigations may delve into how teacher demographics and contextual factors influence student achievement and well-being.

Recommendations for Further Research

In order to further extend the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that:

1. Recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of special education teachers should be a top priority for educational institutions and schools. As communicated in the introduction, special education teacher burnout may have been a cause for staff shortages and schools being able to implement diversity in their school. To reflect the diversity of the student body more accurately, efforts should be made to hire teachers of both genders and different ethnic backgrounds.
2. The pandemic has made already-existing gaps in educational outcomes and access even more noticeable, especially for students from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds. Supporting all students—including males and females from special education minority and non-minority groups—with focused interventions and support services should receive extra consideration. Their specific needs during remote learning could have been met with the aid of social-emotional support programs, culturally sensitive teaching techniques, and virtual mentorship programs.

3. To provide better support for students from a variety of backgrounds, educators should be trained in culturally responsive teaching techniques and continuously pursue professional development opportunities in and outside the district. This practice can be reflected by appreciating and respecting the cultural identities of the students, incorporating culturally appropriate materials into the curriculum, and creating inclusive learning environments in the classroom. The educational curriculum must be actively monitored and changed to better reflect students' cultural identities to support this effort.
4. To help solve the issue of student absenteeism, schools should consider the cultural aspects that could affect attendance patterns when implementing their strategies. All children should have equal access to education, and absenteeism can be decreased with the support of community partnerships, family engagement programs, and culturally sensitive interventions. A lack of dependable internet access and technological gadgets may impact student absenteeism during distance learning. It is imperative to address the digital divide for marginalized students in future pandemics. Legislators and educators should place a major focus on ensuring equitable access to

technology and the Internet. The provision of devices, the installation of Wi-Fi hotspots, and collaboration with neighborhood organizations are all crucial steps in reaching this objective.

5. The adoption of remote and hybrid learning models has brought attention to the need for more studies on how instructional strategies and teacher demographics affect student outcomes in online environments. Evidence-based policies and practices for future crises or disruptions can be informed by longitudinal studies, surveys, and data analytics, which can help identify effective strategies for supporting student learning and well-being during remote learning. It will take more investigation to fully understand the complex connections between student outcomes and teacher demographics. Targeted interventions can be informed by cross-cultural comparisons, qualitative research techniques, and longitudinal studies, which can offer deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying these relationships.
6. Even though the demographics of general education teachers did not significantly correlate with all student outcomes, it is still important to offer them opportunities for continuous professional development to help them be more effective in the classroom. Their capacity to address the various needs of every student can be improved with training in differentiated instruction, classroom management strategies, and instructional best practices.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IRB Approval

Good day, Brittany Dixon!

This is to inform you that your protocol #1897, "The Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Toward the Impact of Covid-19 On Student Outcomes", is exempt from Texas Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) full committee review.

Based on the information provided in the research summary and other information submitted, your research procedures meet the exemption category set forth by the federal regulation 45 CFR 46.104(d)(1): Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction.

The Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) number assigned to Texas Southern University is FWA00003570.

You will receive your signed approval letter electronically. If you have questions, you may contact the Research Compliance Administrator for the Office of Research at 713-313-4245.

PLEASE NOTE: (1) All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document, if applicable. If you are using a consent document that requires participants' signatures, signed copies can be retained for a minimum of 3 years of 5 years for external supported projects. Signed consents from student projects will be retained by the faculty advisor. Faculty is responsible for retaining signed consents for their own projects, however, if the faculty leaves the university, access must be made available to TSU CPHS in the event of an agency audit. (2) Documents submitted to the Office of Research indicate that information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and the identities of the subjects will not be obtained or published; and any disclosures of the human subjects' responses outside the research will not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. The exempt status is based on this information. If any part of this understanding is incorrect, the PI is obligated to submit the protocol for review by the CPHS before beginning the respective research project. (3) Research investigators will promptly report to the CPHS any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others.

This protocol will expire February 2, 2027

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study about special education teachers' attitudes and their effect on student outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research study is being conducted by Brittany Dixon, Doctoral Student at Texas Southern University. The purpose of the study is to investigate the effects of a significant shift in educational environments due to the COVID-19 pandemic—from a traditional classroom setting to an online platform to a hybrid one—on special education instructors working in a suburban school system. It seeks to understand their feelings regarding how impact has altered their perspective on student outcomes. This study will examine special education teachers' attitudes (gender, ethnicity, and years of experience) toward the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes (academic achievement, social behaviors, socioemotional development, and absenteeism). This survey will be administered online to all classroom teachers.

There are no known risks associated with taking part in this research study, and there are no expenses involved in doing so. The information you provide will help validate your experiences and challenges and benefit other special education teachers, programming, and school districts. This survey guarantees complete anonymity. Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, please refrain from including your name on the questionnaire; nobody will have the means to identify you. Your participation and responses will remain confidential, and no one will be aware of your involvement in this study. Your input will not impact your current or future circumstances in any way. The survey will be conducted online, and by participating, you confirm that you have read and understood this consent and are willingly taking part in this anonymous survey.

"This study has been explained to me. I volunteered to take part in this research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the Brittany Dixon at b.dixon8261@student.tsu.edu and/or my faculty advisor, Dr. Viveca Grant can be reached at Viveca.Grant@tsu.edu. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I can call the Texas Southern University Office of Research at 713-313-4301 or go to visit the Office of Research on the Texas Southern University website (http://www.tsu.edu).

Your signature and answer selection below indicate that you have read the information in this document. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate.

____ I agree to partake in this study.

____ I decline the chance to partake in this study.

Participant Name (Please Print)

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

THE ATTITUDES of SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARD the IMPACT of COVID-19 on STUDENT OUTCOMES

Gender
- Male
- Female

Years of Teaching Experience
- 0-5 years
- 6-14 years
- 15+ years

Ethnicity
- African American/Black
- American Indian
- Asian American/Asian
- Hispanic
- White/Caucasian

Age
- < 25 years old
- 26-35 years old
- 36-45 years old
- > 46 years old

Highest Level of Education
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

Grade Level
- Elementary (K-5th grade)
- Middle/Junior High (6th-8th grade)
- High School (9-12th grade)

Which virtual platform did your school use for instruction delivery during COVID-19?
- Zoom
- Google Meet
- Microsoft Teams
- WhatsApp
- YouTube
- Other _____

Subject Taught

- Math
- English
- Science
- Social Studies
- Elective
- All Core Subjects

Content Classification

- Special Education Teacher (If you served as In-Class Support, Life Skills, Adaptive Behavior, Developmental, and or any title for a specialized program serving students with disabilities (SWDs) during 2019-2022 school)
- General Education Teacher (who **did not** receive assistance or support from special education teachers or aides)
- General Education Teacher (who **did** receive assistance or support from special education teachers or aides)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Likert Scale-
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

1. In the course of the pandemic, I felt, I was able to provide adequate instruction to my students.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

2. In the course of the pandemic, I felt, I was able to provide my students with their IEP-mandated accommodations.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

3. In the course of the pandemic, I felt, virtual learning was beneficial to my student's learning.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

4. In the course of the pandemic, I actively avoided engaging with students due to my own feelings about the pandemic.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

5. In the course of the pandemic, I was afforded ample time to develop and execute lessons for my students.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

6. In the course of the pandemic, I felt overstimulated by working with students virtually and in-person simultaneously.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

7. In the course of the pandemic, I felt isolated with dealing with my own issues and having to provide instruction to my students.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

8. In the course of the pandemic, I hoped to have been allowed time to work through my own mental, physical or emotional concerns with COVID-19.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

9. In the course of the pandemic, I felt motivated to teach my students.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

10. In the course of the pandemic, I was able to provide small group sessions for students in need.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Likert Scale-
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

11. In the course of the pandemic, I established manageable expectations about their academic performance.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

12. In the course of the pandemic, I allowed my emotions about the impact of COVID-19 to overflow into classroom.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

13. In the course of the pandemic, I felt confident working with students who were diagnosed emotionally disturbed.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

14. In the course of the pandemic, I provided extra attention to my students who presented behavioral issues.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

15. In the course of the pandemic, I believe, students' disconnections from their peers caused an increase in disruptive behaviors.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

16. In the course of the pandemic, I felt, the loss of proximity from my students was a cause for their disruptive behaviors.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

17. In the course of the pandemic, I believe, external factors (such as illness, death, anxiety, etc.) that students faced played a significant impact on their social behavior.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

18. In the course of the pandemic, I believe my absence from class impacted student behaviors.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

19. In the course of the pandemic, I was able to manage my emotions during instruction.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

STUDENT SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Likert Scale-
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

20. In the course of the pandemic, I believed my students had adequate support to discuss their emotions about COVID-19.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

21. In the course of the pandemic, I allowed my students an opportunity to communicate about their emotions and feelings.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

22. In the course of the pandemic, I believe, students being isolated from their teachers and peers impacted their socio-emotional health.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

23. In the course of the pandemic, I felt, I was able to communicate effectively with my students.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

24. In the course of the pandemic, I provided my students with positive affirmations.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

25. In the course of the pandemic, I provided my students an opportunity to engage in groups with their peers.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

26. In the course of the pandemic, I motivated my students to seek help about their current concerns.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

27. In the course of the pandemic, I was presently active and engaging during classroom instruction.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

28. In the course of the pandemic, I believe students knew who to contact in their time of need.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

Likert Scale-
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

29. In the course of the pandemic, I believed my school did not provide adequate technology to my students to attend school virtually.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

30. In the course of the pandemic, I believed students were sent back into the schools too soon.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral

4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

31. In the course of the pandemic, I believed the COVID-19 pandemic caused my students fear and anxiety to attend school.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

32. In the course of the pandemic, I believe students absence from school are related to family issues at home.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

33. In the course of the pandemic, I believe students would attend school if they received regular check-ins from their teachers.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

34. In the course of the pandemic, the lack of technology assistance is significant in student enrollment.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

35. In the course of the pandemic, my elected absence from class was a cause of student absenteeism.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral

4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

36. In the course of the pandemic, I believe my tardiness virtually for class was an impact on student attendance.

    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neutral
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

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