

## **Teacher Perceptions of Academic Functioning in Children Raised by Grandparents During a Pandemic**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nationally, more than seven million children are being cared for by grandparents. In Texas alone, over 630,000 children live in homes where grandparents are the custodial caretakers. In many cases, children placed in the home of grandparents lived in unpredictable conditions with their parents. Factors contributing to removing children from their home involved parents abusing drugs, incarceration, and violence. Studies have suggested that children raised by grandparents experience increased academic, emotional, and behavioral difficulties than their peers. With students already experiencing traumatic changes, teachers' perceptions can impact how they educate the child. Furthermore, some studies have shown that teacher perceptions of non-traditional families appear to be unfair and biased. It tends to emphasize particular populations and does not compare teacher perceptions across various groups. With the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the closing of schools, the learning gap has widened. In addition, the closure of schools has had damaging consequences for children who are living in poverty and is likely to worsen inequalities. Studies have suggested that teachers can influence how students learn, and student behaviors can influence the way teachers teach. This study used a qualitative case study approach that focused on a school district in South Texas. Ten elementary teachers from grades 1 through 4 participated in this study. The researchers examined the perceptions and experiences of teachers toward students' academic progress and behaviors of children raised by grandparents and those of their peers. With the increasing numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren, additional research is needed to understand better and address the needs and concerns of these caretakers. Recognizing the vital role that grandparents have in raising children that are at most vulnerable and exposed to higher risks should be a beginning. Additionally, it is important for administrators to provide teachers with the proper training to be able to deliver instruction to students without bias. Providing educators with a variety of strategies and interventions can help pave the way for success in education.

**Keywords:** grandparents raising grandchildren, teacher perceptions, behaviors, poverty, student achievement

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## INTRODUCTION

In America, over seven million children who are under the age of eighteen happen to be in the care of grandparents (Edwards, 2018). Additionally, the number of grandparents becoming custodial caregivers is expected to increase (Dare et al., 2020). As more grandparents take on the role of caring for their grandchildren and are enrolled in public schools, it is important that educators understand the opposing circumstances that hinder children's educational success (Peterson et al., 2019). Adjusting and adapting to this challenging role can be a difficult process for both the grandparent and grandchild (Choi et al., 2016). While children who are removed from their parents' home experience a difficult change, there are benefits when they are placed with grandparents. These benefits include consistency, less severance, and staying connected with other family members (Dare et al., 2020). Furthermore, children who have the support of extended family are more likely to have a positive outlook throughout their lives (Dare et al., 2020).

There are various reasons why children are placed in the care of grandparents. One common driver that has contributed to this arrangement has been the growing drug epidemic that has permeated many families (Generations United, 2018). Consequently, the growing abuse of opioid and heroin addiction has impacted families across the United States. Grandparents taking on the role of primary caregivers are likely to face many critical and challenging obstacles. Due to the increase in children living in homes with grandparents, it has become important to understand the role that grandparents play and how it affects children at home and at school. Understanding the perceptions that teachers are likely to experience can provide educators and administrators with the opportunity to provide them with resources that will empower the family and the well-being of their grandchildren.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Currently, limited information exists on the perceptions of teachers regarding the academic needs of schoolchildren who are living with grandparents. Most studies involving grandparents discuss the relationship between grandchild and grandparent. While these studies have provided valuable data on grandparents, this qualitative study brought about a reflective comprehension of the perceptions and practices of teachers regarding the academic functions, including the social, emotional, and behavior issues in children raised by grandparents in comparison to their peers.

Research has suggested that teacher expectations can influence the approach they use to teach their students (Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, in this study, "evidence has suggested that teachers form their expectations based on factors including student academic achievement, and classroom engagement and behaviors" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1). Other factors include the student's socioeconomic status (SES), background, gender, appearance, and other characteristics (Wang et al., 2020). In yet another study, Ho and Cherng (2018) noted that teacher perceptions of the students' family life appeared to influence teaching efficacy and expectations of students.

In one study, Lee and Blitz (2016) revealed that grandparents cannot always engage with the school system to identify services that would benefit their grandchildren. Furthermore, Reynolds et al. (2003) revealed that when school administrators are not cognizant of family circumstances, multigenerational families can be further weakened. Therefore, it is essential to

explore and understand the family contexts of children raised by grandparents and how teachers are approaching their academic needs.

Findler (2007) mentioned in one study that professional practitioners, including teachers, are inclined to disregard the “potential contribution of the informal network in general, and grandparents in particular,” to the well-being of children (p. 201). Studies do suggest that a school environment has a significant influence on a child’s development through the interactions of direct individuals, such as teachers (Sheras & Bradshaw, 2016). As a result, awareness programs to help educators work with grandparent-headed families should be developed and implemented.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To understand teacher perceptions of children raised by grandparents, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do teachers perceive the academic progress and behaviors between students raised by grandparents and those of their peers who are raised by other caretakers?

RQ2. How has the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis impacted the academic progress of students raised by grandparents as perceived by teachers?

This research used a basic qualitative approach focused on a case study design. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), a case study is a practical method to investigate modern phenomena in real-world situations. This study examined the perceptions of ten teachers toward students’ academic progress and behaviors who were raised by grandparents. Studies have shown that in the case of children cared for by grandparents, they often display academic difficulties along with behavior problems (Peterson et al., 2019). Since the number of grandparents raising children continues to rise (Edwards, 2018), the information gathered from this study will add to the limited data available in this area of research.

The majority of the literature that was cited in this study was drawn from qualitative studies on grandparent raising grandchildren (Choi et al., 2016; Doley et al., 2015; Edwards, 2018; Hill, 2012; Kelley et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2018; & Peterson et al., 2019). Because studies seem to suggest that children raised by grandparents are more likely to face academic challenges and exhibit behavior difficulties (Peterson et al., 2019), the information gathered allowed for a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive the academic functioning and behaviors of students who are being cared for by grandparents. In addition, this study is helping to fill a gap in the limited studies available concerning the academic success of children who are living with their grandparents.

The main researcher is a special education teacher with seven years of experience teaching children with disabilities and behavior disorders. The researcher acquired most of her teaching experience working in Title 1 schools. In working with this group of children, an interest was prompted in the researcher when a difference in academic functioning and behaviors were noticed in students being cared for by grandparents and students being cared for by their natural parents. Therefore, a qualitative case study originated from the desire to learn from other teachers if this was a characteristic of children raised by grandparents or if these concerns were occurring among all students regardless of who was raising them. Recognizing that teacher perspective and practices are influential factors on students, this study will add to the limited research knowledge on this topic.

## SAMPLE

For this study, purposeful sampling was used for participant selection. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) explain that “the researcher should select particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest.” They further state that “subjects should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the study” (p. 138). The sample consisted of ten general education teachers teaching elementary students from grades 1 through 4. The average years of classroom experience between all teachers was about ten years. The research focused on elementary teachers working in a school district in South Texas. Participants had either taught or were teaching students being raised by grandparents. Initially, sixteen teachers were invited to participate in this study. Of the sixteen teachers invited, two could not participate, and four did not reply to the invitation. Ten teachers gave their consent and agreed to contribute.

## INSTRUMENTATION

The qualitative research instrument designated for this study was a case study approach. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted through a web-based platform. The researcher utilized tailored questions that were developed from the research literature and consisted of an open-ended format. The researcher developed a good rapport by being respectful, nonjudgmental, and communicating appreciation for their participation. These are all important factors for creating a successful interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participant interview questions were noted on a word document. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative researchers are instrumental in gathering the information for interpretation. The participants were sent the consent forms, which explained the study, the requirements, and the procedures. When consent forms were acknowledged and signed, the participants were sent the interviews questions to complete at their convenience.

## RESULTS

This qualitative study provided teacher perceptions based on the analysis of ten teachers who responded to questions. Their responses were based on current and or prior students. Email communications were sent to ten different level elementary teachers to gather perceptions and look for similarities or differences in their experiences in the classroom. Table 1 illustrates participating teachers and the grade level they teach. Every teacher who participated in this study was currently employed with a school district.

Table 1  
*Teacher Grade Levels*

Number of Participating Teachers	Grade Level
2	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade

3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade
2	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade

The researchers compared the experiences of several grade-level teachers from four different school campuses within the district. The first three interview questions were directed at discovering information on how long teachers had been teaching, what made them decide to go into the field of education, their ideal classroom setting, and what they expect from their students. One teacher did not indicate the years of teaching experience they had, and therefore, an email was sent to gather that information. No other teachers were contacted. Table 2 provides the characteristics of each teacher based on the responses to interview questions one through three.

Table 2  
*Teacher Characteristics*

Teacher	Characteristics
T1	14 years teaching; Inspired by her teachers; Students are on grade level; Follow rules
T2	5 years teaching; Enjoys working with children; Having the needed resources; Be ready to learn
T3	33 years teaching; Inspired by 1 <sup>st</sup> grade teacher; Communication between administrators and parents; Expects students to learn
T4	25 years teaching; Enjoys teaching; Having the needed resources; Students do their best
T5	2 years teaching; Enjoys working with young children; Warm and inviting classroom; Be ready to learn
T6	7 years teaching; Working as a substitute; Teaching and not worry so much about STAAR testing; To make progress in 9 months
T7	2 years teaching; Inspired by school coach; Unlimited resources, support, and parental involvement; Students do their best
T8	20 years teaching; Enjoys working with children; Small class size, student collaboration, teacher is facilitating; Be a good student and learn
T9	2 years teaching; Enjoys working with children; Students feel confident and have needed resources; Learn and collaborate
T10	2 years teaching; Enjoys working with children; Students feel confident and have needed resources; Learn and collaborate

The teacher responses were first analyzed by using the method of open coding. A hard copy of the responses was used to identify common phrases, similarities, and dissimilarities. The emerging themes were identified and noted in a word document. Patton (2015; as cited by Creswell & Poth, 2018) stated that using an analysis software would be easier for data analysis; however, it is not required. Patton (2015; as cited by Creswell & Poth, 2018) also stated that “the real analytical work takes place in your head” (p. 181).

The teacher responses were analyzed for similar phrases and or words. As the data analysis continued by hand, six themes emerged. According to Saldana (2015), “a theme is an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and or what it means” (p. 297). The themes were: needed resources, student learning, parent support/involvement, lack of

computer skills, upbringing, and social interaction. After identifying the themes, a description was presented for each one.

### **Theme 1: Lack of Resources**

When resources are not available to the teacher and students, those who bear the burden are often the students. For teachers to teach and students to learn, resources need to be made available to support student proficiency. When teachers were asked to describe an ideal classroom, five teachers from different grade levels who participated in this study noted that an ideal classroom would have the needed resources that are needed to teach every student for them to learn. T2: “The ideal classroom is a room full of all resources needed to make the lessons engaging and students that want to learn.” T4: “The ideal classroom would have an abundance of resources and centers for children to learn from doing and exploring.” T7: “In a perfect world setting, I would have unlimited resources and support.” T9: “An ideal classroom would have a technology corner as well as centers. The walls would not be bare but instead full of inspirational words and various learning concepts.” T10: “An ideal classroom is a place where students feel confident. This would include a positive and organized teacher as well as resources to help all students be successful.”

### **Theme 2: Student Learning**

Teachers play an essential role in forming the learning environment and how children will learn. When teachers were asked what they expected from their students, six teachers said they wanted to see their students learn. T2: “My expectations are that all students come to school every day or log into Zoom and be ready to learn.” T3: “I have high expectations for all my students and parents. I expect every child in my classroom to learn.” T4: “I expect each student to work up to their potential and learn.” T5: “I expect for my students to challenge themselves, be confident in their choices, and be ready to learn new things each day.” T6: “I expect my students to grow in nine months.” T10: “I expect students to take responsibility for their actions, learn, and collaborate with each other in class.”

### **Theme 3: Parent Support/Involvement**

One of the themes that emerged from this study was parental support and or involvement. When teachers were asked about their biggest challenge as a teacher, four of the ten teachers stated that it was the lack of parental involvement. T1: “My biggest challenge as a teacher is the lack of parental involvement.” T2: “My biggest challenge is not having a lot of parent support.” T4: “My biggest challenge as a teacher would be parent involvement. It would be great to have parents do their part at home.” T8: “Lack of communication with parents and staff.”

#### **Theme 4: Technology Skills**

When teachers were asked to share their experiences when working with grandparents in comparison to other caretakers, the theme that emerged was technology skills. Today's classroom looks much different than your traditional classrooms of long ago. With the onset of the COVID19 pandemic, technology has become an essential tool in how students are learning.

When examining teacher responses, eight teachers felt that grandparents lacked the technical skills to help their grandchildren. T1: "It is hard for grandparents, especially when dealing with technology and their work in general." T2: "Grandparents are supportive, but most of the time, they don't know what to do when it comes to schoolwork; and right now, they don't understand technology." T3: "Most of my grandparents are "old school" and have high expectations for their grandchildren. Some of them are "tired" and overwhelmed with technology issues." T4: "Usually grandparents are less tech-savvy, which lately has been an issue." T5: "I have noticed that the student is more likely to receive answers from the grandparents who are less tech-savvy than other caretakers." T7: "This year, I have accepted pictures of work or done one-to-one Zoom tutoring with the student because grandparents are not tech-savvy as opposed to the traditional parent." T8: "Grandparents tend to have more difficulty with technology." T10: "With all the technology students are using, the grandparents I have worked with are scared to touch the technology."

#### **Theme 5: Upbringing**

When teachers were asked about their perception of the academic differences between students raised by grandparents and students raised by their natural parents, four teachers stated that students raised by grandparents are likely to have more difficulty in school. T1: "Grandparents do not often have the same experiences as they would with parents who might be younger. For example, reading to them, helping with homework, playing outside games, or travel to places." T3: "Most grandparents are more lenient when it comes to discipline and more forgiving of their grandchild's unacceptable behavior." T8: "Their belief system is from a different time than now. They may not understand a lot of what the student likes/dislikes and is involved in." T10: "Students being raised by grandparents are more likely not to push themselves to reach their highest potential. Grandparents will trust their grandchild to have completed assignments when it is not always true."

#### **Theme 6: Social Interaction**

While teachers acknowledge that learning was the primary concern, teacher responses indicated that the lack of social interaction could create further deficits in learning. T3: "The learning student lack the social, emotional, and educational experiences that are so vital to their academic success." T4: "I feel that the interactions between students such as peer tutoring, learning games, and the use of manipulatives no longer exist. We constantly have to keep in mind social distancing." T5: "The students are not getting to use physical manipulatives or interacting with each other." T10: "One disadvantage is that students will not always collaborate in groups because of technology distractions like cameras, google searches, games, YouTube, and the ability to hide behind the camera." When children learn appropriate social interactions, the benefit is order and harmony. Even when students are in the classroom, social distancing is required, and teachers are not allowed much close contact with students.

## COVID-19 Impact on Education

Not since the Spanish Flu has there been a malady that has disrupted society and its members. The COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled the lives of businesses, educators, parents, and students across the globe. In addition, teachers have an impression that the COVID-19 pandemic has stalled learning. T1 stated, “Students are lacking the physical manipulatives and hands-on material for success. Many parents are doing the actual work for the students and what is being turned in is not a true picture of what the students can do.” Teachers felt that while students are safe at home, there are too many distractions, and it is often challenging to engage students in the instruction.

When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and students have had to reorganize their normalcy and adapt to a new way of learning. The public education system was not prepared for such a drastic change. While schools have partially reopened, many parents are afraid to send their children to school. Additionally, many children are also afraid to come to school. The impact that COVID-19 has had on students’ academic performance is not known at this time; however, teachers are perceiving that students are falling behind. T3 reported, “These children will struggle for the next couple of years in their educational careers. It will take at least the next couple of years and much hard work for these students to get caught up.” Most teachers reported that the deterrents to this change in instruction delivery are that students are not getting the appropriate support to succeed in school. Many of the teachers perceive that COVID-19 has negatively impacted student learning. However, T4 stated, “I have learned so much about technology these last few months.” T9 stated, “Many of my virtual students would be more successful in an in-class instruction.”

## INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

In examining both the literature review and their findings in comparison to the perceptions provided by the teachers, it is realistic to say that parents and or grandparents are struggling with providing their children with the needed guidance and support to succeed in school. Research has suggested a higher possibility for children raised by grandparents to have academic and behavioral difficulties and often require school intervention (Edwards, 2018). Some explanation for this basis is that grandparents have limited resources and might not be able to provide their grandchildren with the needed direction and sustenance to be successful in school (Lee et al., 2018). Furthermore, studies have reported that grandparents lack the cognitive skills to understand the curriculum (Wilson & Gross, 2018). The six themes that emerged from this study after coding and analyzing teacher responses were as follows: lack of resources, student learning, parent support/involvement, lack of computer skills, upbringing, and social interaction.

The findings in this study suggest that teachers do perceive students raised by grandparents as having an increased risk of failing academically than their peers due to a combination of motives. A summary of the themes is noted to explain how students raised by grandparents are viewed by their educators. The findings may not represent every grandparent; however, it is an insight into what teachers are experiencing in the classroom, and it is through these perceptions that support for grandparents could be organized to improve academic functioning for students raised by grandparents.

Theme 1: Lack of Resources- According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education is a basic human right that can have a direct consequence on the well-being and independence of individuals (Snilstveit et al., 2017). Studies show that when education is limited, so are the opportunities for a stable and prosperous life (Pratima, 2019). In a study conducted by Gibson and McGlynn (2013), it was found that kinship caregivers such as grandparents were likely to be less educated than non-kinship caregivers and had lower income and fewer resources. They might not have the appropriate tools to support their grandchildren, making it difficult for students to learn, especially if they are learning from home due to COVID-19.

Education is an essential tool to decrease poverty, but it becomes difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn when teachers do not have the needed tools. As suggested by Mahoney (2021),



students attending schools that lack resources have the same academic requirements as students attending schools with resources to help teachers do an effective job. On the other hand, if the caregiver does not have the resources such as internet service, a computer, or a safe environment, the learning gap of many children living in that home is likely to widen. Mahoney (2021) further states that students who are attending these impoverished schools “are trying to learn under conditions of neglect” (pg. 659). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the loss of revenue from local and state funding, limiting the availability of resources in the classroom.

In this study, five out of ten teachers expressed that having the needed resources to teach their students was significant. Another teacher noted that abundant resources and centers are essential for children to learn through undertaking and exploring. Resources are needed tools that provide teachers the forum to effectively teach students, thus making it easier for them to learn, especially for children who are already struggling with academics, such as students that grandparents are raising. As Peterson (2016) notes, for grandparents who live in a rural area, finding resources and support for their children can be very difficult. The findings correlate with other studies that conveyed the importance of resources, how they contribute to effective teaching, and how they can decrease the learning gap that so many students raised by grandparents are experiencing.

Theme 2: Student Learning- According to Wang et al. (2020), teacher expectations can impact the approach they use to teach their students. Furthermore, studies have found that teachers often construct different opportunities for their higher or lower accomplishing students, which is then acknowledged to students through teacher approaches and student-teacher interactions (Wang et al., 2020). According to Lee et al. (2017), children who come to live with grandparents are already experiencing anxiety, confusion, and unresolved issues that are likely to manifest in the classroom. Children can also experience challenges that could create obstacles to learning and achieving academic success (Lee et al., 2018).

In a study by Papageorge et al. (2020), it was suggested that teacher expectations could influence student outcomes. Studies have also suggested that how students view themselves is influenced by teacher expectations. Furthermore, teachers play a significant role in creating the learning environment and how well students will grasp what is being taught (Heyder et al., 2020). The researchers wanted to understand teacher expectations in their classroom and how they perceived students whom grandparents raised compared to other caretakers.

In the study by Wang et al. (2020), he noted that teacher expectations could influence their approach to teaching students. While teacher expectations contribute to the academic achievement of students, teachers should also understand how children learn. This study found that six out of ten teachers responded that they expected all students to learn and succeed regardless of the family setting. The findings also suggest that teachers in this district want their students to succeed regardless of the caretakers. The findings correlate with other studies that have found that when teachers have higher expectations of students, they will do better academically and attain success in future grade levels. The goal for most teachers is for students to learn and do well.

Theme 3: Parent Support/Involvement- Being a teacher is a difficult job, and with COVID-19 lingering on school campuses, teachers are probably experiencing more challenges with having to teach online students as well as having to do in-class instruction. Teachers spend about the same time with children as parents do. However, some parents are not providing the support teachers need when it comes to their child’s education. In the study by Avnet et al. (2019), they found that parental involvement has an immense influence in the classroom, especially for elementary students. They further explained that parental involvement is a critical factor in the academic success of students. According to studies, parental involvement is a vital factor for student success; however, educators should do their best to generate parent involvement especially during the early ages.

In the study by Lehti et al. (2019), it was found that when grandparents were engaged in their grandchildren’s education, it correlated with increased academic achievement, cognitive development, and mental well-being. In addition, Lehti et al. (2019) found that the level of influence grandparents have on grandchildren might be related to the level of education grandparents have. The study suggests that the more educated grandparents are, the more resources and support they can provide to their grandchildren.

However, Avnet et al. (2019) found that parents often place the responsibility of student achievement on the school and the teachers. Among the ten participants in this study, four expressed the need for more parent support/involvement. Studies have shown that when parents are consistently involved in their child's education, they attend school regularly, have higher test scores, improved behaviors, and increased academic performance (Santiago et al., 2016). The reality is that parents and teachers share the responsibility of helping students succeed in school.

The outcome of this study seems to suggest that parent involvement is a concern for many teachers. The findings seem to correlate with studies showing that the education system needs additional tools to better support grandparents to overcome the obstacles hindering the ability to form a more positive partnership between school and grandparents. Educators and administrators must include or involve caretakers as much as possible in the child's education, especially during the early academic years.

Theme 4: Technology Skills-Technology has always been a valuable tool in education; however, with COVID-19, technology has become more necessary than ever before. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and students feel it is best to stay home and receive their education in a safe environment. Although students will be learning in a safe setting, they must have the appropriate resources to access the classroom instruction, such as computers, internet access, and technology support.

In examining teacher responses, a significant concern was the lack of computer skills that grandparents possessed. Eight of the ten teachers felt that grandparents did not have the skills to help students navigate the learning platform, thus leaving a wider gap in students learning. The findings correlate with studies that state grandparents have limited skills in today's curriculum and technology (Taylor et al., 2015). While two teachers felt that grandparents are trying to support their grandchildren, studies seem to indicate that the needs of many grandparents go unmet (Lee et al., 2018). In addition, studies have suggested that children raised by grandparents have more academic deficits than children raised by their natural parents (Pilkaukas & Dunifon, 2016). Despite the considerable amount of time that grandparents devote to ensure their grandchildren's well-being and success, grandparents struggle to understand the curriculum that has changed from the time they attended school.

Theme 5: Upbringing- Grandparents have always been important members of the family unit. Raising children in any capacity can be challenging for any parent; however, studies suggest that grandparents often struggle with adapting to the challenges of caring for their grandchildren and navigating educational resources (Taylor et al., 2015). This study showed that four of the ten teachers perceived grandparents to be less stern and more forgiving of improper behaviors. The findings appear to be consistent with previous studies that suggest children raised by grandparents often experience more behavior problems than children raised by their parents (Lee et al., 2017). Three teachers believed that grandparents are not as involved in their grandchildren's education because they lack the skills to support them academically. The curriculum today is much different from the curriculum used during their generation. It is central that educators understand the unconventional environment of children whose grandparents are raising to ensure success in school (Lee et al., 2017).

Theme 6: Social Interaction- Social learning is fundamental to the livelihood of children. When children are in school, they learn how to meet, approach, and relate with their peers and teachers (Ladd et al., 2006). Children who have been placed in the care of their grandparents often experience feelings of anxiety and confusion concerning their past with their biological family (Lee et al., 2017). These emotions can create children to be shy and distant. It can also limit the activities they will participate in due to fear of being ridiculed or rejected. It is especially vital for children being raised by grandparents to interact and form relationships with others to ease the emotional feelings they might be experiencing, such as anger or rejection due to the change in family structure.

In a study conducted by Taylor and Leung (2020), children from multilingual or multicultural backgrounds tend to form social, traditional, and emotional roles by those who live in their environment. Additionally, they mentioned that when teachers incorporate social collaboration with literacy and learning, children will have the capacity to increase "their learning, thinking, and construction of knowledge" (Taylor & Leung, 2020, p. 9). Furthermore, Ladd et al. (2006) explained that the relationship

with teachers is very much like a parent-child relationship. Children need to feel connected to the teacher. When students can form a positive relationship with educators, they are more likely to come to school and do well academically (Ladd et al., 2006).

In this study, five of the ten teachers had concerns about the lack of social interaction and student collaboration during COVID-19. The findings in this study seem to correlate with previous studies that indicate the importance of social interaction among children and how social interaction permits children to make friends that can help them adjust within the school environment (Ladd et al., 2006). It is crucial for children being raised by grandparents to interact and form relationships with others to ease the emotional feelings they might be experiencing due to the loss of a parent, siblings, or even friends.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The results of this research have provided an insight into the perceptions of teachers. Grandparents raising children is a difficult task. It can be stressful, exhausting, and financially challenging. Teachers have provided us with a glimpse of the challenges they face in the classroom. Teachers would benefit from acquiring professional development that explains these challenges and encourages parent participation in the student's education. Campus administrators would also benefit by having teachers focused on teaching and students focused on learning. In addition, the district would have improved standardized scores and is likely to have a positive effect on parents and students. This study provides a preview of teacher perceptions and encourages educational leaders to change how grandparents are viewed and supported. Grandparents are important family members in a child's life. They can provide children with an abundance of wisdom, unconditional love, and stability.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the growing number of grandparents caring for school-age children, educators need to understand that grandparents are vital to children's education. Having a positive image of this group of caretakers can encourage children to do their best. Grandparents are an asset to both the teachers and the students, but they are often seen as fragile, uneducated, and not in the best health. This research aimed to present the perception of teachers and the differences they found between children raised by grandparents and those raised by other caretakers.

Teacher perceptions matter. They can encourage growth in a child or discourage them to the point that they feel ostracized. Studies have shown that teachers' attitudes toward students play a crucial part in how children learn. This study presented teachers' perceptions from a small school district in Texas, and the researchers hope to provide information that can further support future research.

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