

PREDICTORS OF GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY FOR EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH ASD

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Objective:

This study examines the influence of various sources of teacher self-efficacy on general education teacher self-efficacy beliefs for educating students with ASD. The effects of ASD-specific training or professional development, peer observations, feedback from consultation/collaboration and teacher attitudes on teacher self-efficacy for education students with ASD are examined. The examination of relationships among these variables will add to the relatively small body of literature addressing sources of teacher self-efficacy in regards to students with ASD.

Background/Rationale:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2017) report that 1 in 59 children have ASD, a significant increase from 2000 when the prevalence rate stood at 1 in 150 (Baio et al., 2018). In educational settings, students with ASD, represent one of the fastest growing groups receiving special education services with enrollment of these students increasing from 0.2% in 2000 to 1.1% in 2013 (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016). This increase has significant implications for general education teachers who are required to instruct and provide appropriate learning environments for these students.

Problem and Purpose

Despite the established high prevalence of ASD, the literature suggests that teachers have poor to moderate ASD knowledge (Al-Sharbati et al., 2015; Alnemary, 2017; Arif et al., 2013; Bressette, 2017; Helps et al., 1999; Hendricks, 2011). Moreover, studies suggest that a significant number of teachers have had little to no ASD training (Angiulo, 2014; Arif et al., 2013; Biasotti, 2013; Keefe, 2017; Spirko, 2015; Whaley, 2002; Wilkerson, 2012), and less than 5% of special education and general education teachers report using best practices when instructing students with ASD (Morrier et al., 2010). Given the challenges that students with ASD present to educators, and the significant implications of teacher self-efficacy on a variety of classroom and student factors, examining the sources of self-efficacy for general education teachers who educate these students is an important endeavor that requires more attention in the literature.

Research questions/Hypotheses

This study examines the influence of ASD-specific training or professional development, peer observations, feedback from consultation/collaboration and teacher attitudes on general education teacher's self-efficacy beliefs for educating students with ASD, as well as whether knowledge mediates the effect of professional development on teacher self-efficacy. It is hypothesized that the proposed theoretical model of teacher self-efficacy for educating students with ASD will fit an empirical model based on collected data.

Methodology:

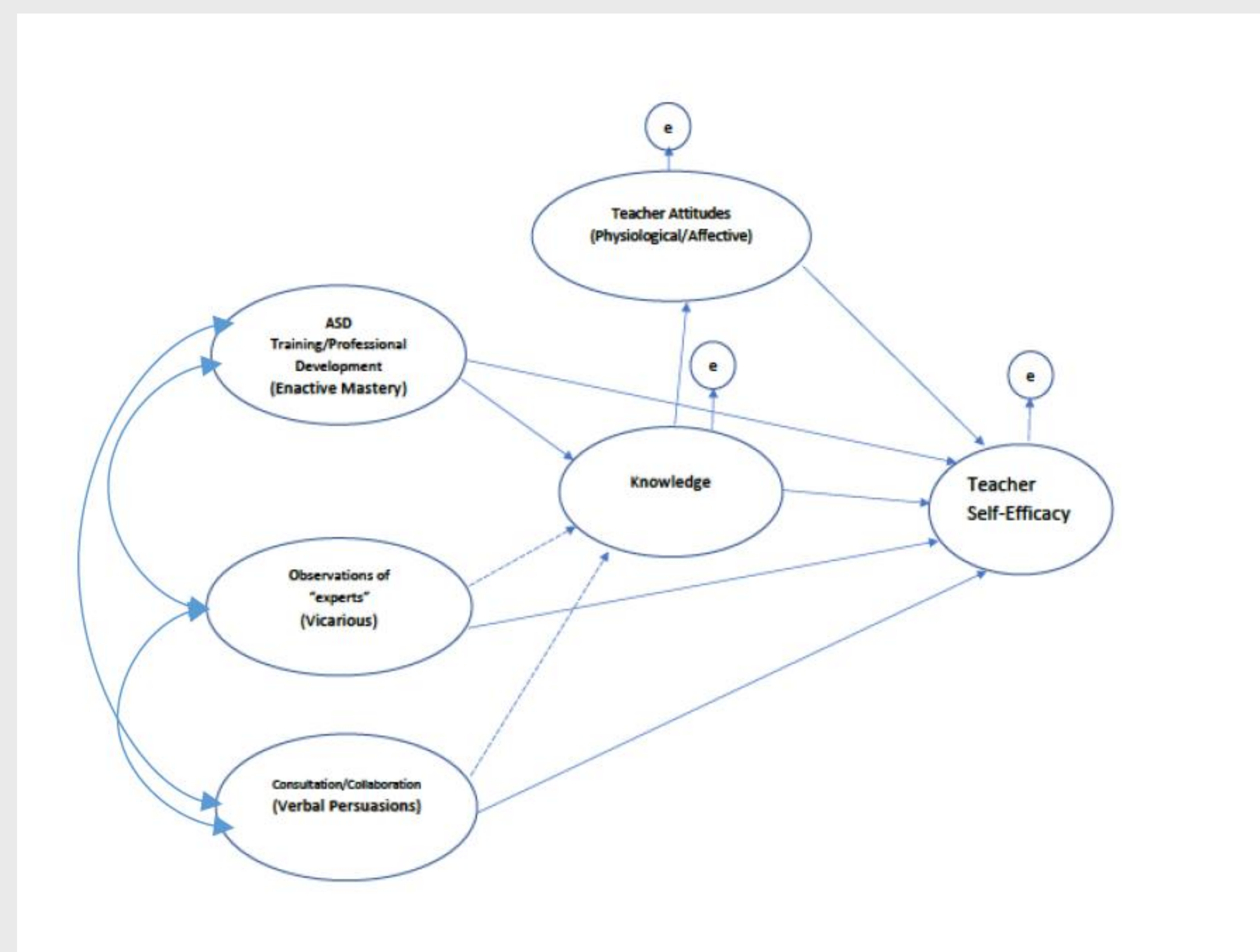
Research Design:

This quantitative study will utilize non-experimental correlational model testing. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data. The survey consisted of 52 items including the following sections: Demographic, ASD-specific training, consultation with experts, Autism Knowledge questionnaire, Autism Attitude Scale for Teachers, and Teacher Self-Efficacy for ASD. The use of structural equation modeling will allow for comparisons between the model and empirical data.

Participants:

The target population of this study was general education teachers teaching grades kindergarten through 12th grade across the Midwestern states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Participants were selected and contacted using publicly available email addresses found on the school districts' websites. Surveys were sent via email to 5,409 teachers and 536 participants completed or partially completed the surveys. After screening the data for missing or invalid data, the final sample size was 300.

Hypothesized theoretical Model



Current Progress:

This research is currently under the data analysis phase, however, preliminary results suggests that the hypothesized model does not fit an empirical model. The factors that appear to have the most influence on teacher efficacy are knowledge of ASD and teacher attitudes. Additional models are being examined for goodness of fit.

Significance of the Study

Despite the established importance of teacher self-efficacy on several aspects of classroom instruction, such as behavior management, student outcomes and instructional practices, very few studies investigate this variable in relation to students with ASD. Of the studies that do investigate, limitations such as small sample sizes impact the generalizability of results. In addition, few studies examine the four sources of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997). By examining the sources of teacher efficacy for educating students with ASD, this study will not only add to the limited body of research on this topic, but provide direction for school districts, teacher training programs, and other entities providing training for teachers of students with ASD.

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