Introduction

Attribution Theory

- Teachers make various attributions about their students, which may affect their teaching.
- How we attribute others’ behavior impacts our beliefs, affect and how we behave in return.¹
- Attributions are guided by our perceptions of locus/controllability and stability of a behavior.¹

Teacher Attributions and Teacher Characteristics

- Past research indicates that certain teacher characteristics may be associated with specific attributions of students.
- Teachers with more experience viewed students’ learning difficulties as more internal and stable compared to teachers with novice experience.²,³
- Special education teachers rated student difficulties as more unstable than general education teachers.⁴

Teacher Attributions and Teaching Practices

- Specific teachers’ attributions of challenging student behaviour have been associated with the use of different teacher practices.
- Teachers who attributed disruptive behaviour as stable and under the student’s control engaged in more corrective feedback and negative behaviour.⁵
- Teachers who attributed challenging behaviours as not under students’ control engaged in more: Emotional perspective taking of the student and believed calmly speaking to the student was the best behavioural management strategy.⁶
- Increased satisfaction with interventions and positive interactions with their students.⁷

Teacher Attributions of Challenging Student Behaviour and Teacher-Student Interactions

- Specific teachers’ attributions of challenging student behaviour have been demonstrated to positively or negatively impact teacher-student interactions.
- Teachers’ attributions of students’ misbehavior as stable and under the child’s control were positively associated with disruptive behaviour ratings.⁸
- Teachers who believed students were in control of their social misbehaviors reported a stronger negative effect on the closeness of their relationship.⁹
- Teachers who attributed disruptive student behaviour as not under the student’s control reported a closer teacher-student relationship.⁵

The Current Study

Research Questions

1. Are teacher characteristics (teacher certifications and years of experience) associated with teachers’ attributions of ADHD type behaviour?
2. Are teachers’ attributions of ADHD type behaviour associated with effective teacher practices (empathy, checking in with students, and corrective style), and the quality of the teacher-student relationship?

Hypotheses

1. Teachers with special education certifications or fewer years of teaching experience are more likely to attribute student ADHD type behaviours as unstable and not under the child’s control.
2. Teachers who attribute student ADHD type behaviours as unstable or uncontrollable will have higher quality teacher-student relationships, and will use more empathy, check ins with students, and discreet corrections, as well as fewer public corrections.

Participants

- Participants were a part of an intervention trial focused on making inclusive classrooms in British Columbia and Ohio.
- N = 34 elementary teachers, N = 529 Students
- Number of Years as Teacher Range: 0.2 – 36 years(M = 11.42, SD = 8.96)
- Certified in General Education (n = 28), certified in Special Education (n = 6)

Measures & Design

- Written Analogue Questionnaire (WAQ)
  - Assesses teacher attributions of student ADHD type behaviour using 10-point Likert Scale.
  - Attribution of Controllability + Locus (α = .86), Attribution of Stability (α = .81).
- Classroom Life Measure (CLM)
  - Averaged student reported quality of teacher personal support using five-point Likert Scale (α = .65).
- Classroom Observations of teacher, proportion score: total coded by total periods observed for year: Emphaty, Check-ins with student, Public corrections, and Discreet corrections.
- Teachers reported WAQ in the Fall, students reported CLM in the Spring, teacher practices coded in classroom by trained observers throughout the school year.

Results

- Partial correlation (controlling for intervention) demonstrated teachers who attributed ADHD type behaviours to unstable factors engaged in more discreet corrections (r = -.64, p < .001).
- Partial correlation indicated attributions were not associated with any other teaching practice or the teacher-student relationship. T-tests and Pearson Correlation indicated that teacher characteristics were not associated with teacher attributions.

Discussion and Future Directions

- Teachers who believe ADHD type behaviours are unlikely to reoccur or that behaviour may change over time may exert more effort to discretely correct such behaviours.
- Discrete corrective style is considered a valuable strategy when correcting student misbehavior.¹⁰ Future directions may consider teacher attributions as an effective intervention target to increase teacher use of discreet corrective style.
- Future directions may explore if teachers with unstable attributions are more receptive to intervention efforts considering they may be already engaging in helpful practices, such as discreet corrective feedback.
- Results indicated that teachers, irrespective of attribution type, utilized the practices of checking in with students, empathy, and public corrective style a similar amount. Perhaps these specific practices are not associated with attributions, and teachers engage in these practices regardless of their attribution type.

References