Multi-tiered systems of Support for Students' Whole Person Growth, School Sustainability, and Social Justice

BY

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Abstract

This study explores how U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers use the multi-tiered systems of Support (MTSS) to promote students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice. MTSS is a comprehensive, three-tiered framework incorporating universal, targeted, and intensive interventions to address general and special education students' academic, social, and emotional needs. This descriptive qualitative research investigates the challenges and strategies of 3rd-grade teachers in employing MTSS effectively. Participants included 12 U.S. 3rd-grade teachers (6 males and six females) from various elementary schools across the United States, recruited via purposive and snowball sampling within semi-structured and open-ended interview protocol. Findings reveal three primary challenges faced by these teachers: (1) implementation difficulty, (2) meeting diverse and equitable needs, and (3) data-driven decision-making. To address these challenges, teachers identified the need for (1) continuous training, (2) instructional resources, and (3) collaboration and support systems. Furthermore, teachers employed three key strategies to enhance student learning and school effectiveness: (1) Academic support, (2) Integration of social-emotional well-being, and (3) Promotion of equity and inclusion. Future research should expand the scope to include a more diverse and extensive sample of teachers across different grade levels and geographic locations. More implications and recommendations are suggested.

Keywords: Elementary School Teachers, Holistic Approach, Multi-tiered systems of Support, Qualitative Research, Social Justice, Sustainability

Introduction

School districts and principals encourage classroom teachers to explore a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to guide each student toward their learning goals. MTSS is a cohesive, three-tiered framework comprising universal, targeted, and intensive interventions that many districts and schools use to meet general and special education students' academic, social, and emotional needs (Vetter et al., 2024). MTSS systematically provides students with increasing levels of intervention and support in various domains, including academic, social, and emotional development and behavior. It has effectively improved students' academic achievement, including language, reading, and math skills, and reduced problem behaviors, such as suspensions, expulsions, poor attendance, and school dropout rates. As a schoolwide, three-tiered prevention and intervention system for academic and behavior problems, MTSS contributes directly to sustainability and indirectly through growing support from staff (Bahr et al., 2023).

MTSS facilitates school- and district-wide intervention programs that assess students' learning performance for program evaluation. It provides a continuum of academic support for all students using three tiers: (1) a universal curriculum targeting all students to bring most to an acceptable level of proficiency; (2) targeted supplemental instruction for students with poor responses to tier 1; and (3) intensive instructional interventions designed to increase student progress, which may or may not include special education (Bobo et al., 2023).

MTSS requires knowledge of the theoretical and empirical foundations of professional learning. Professional learning should include ongoing, standards-based education to increase educator capacity, such as knowledge, skills, and dispositions. This contributes to improved implementation of identified practices, resulting in better student outcomes. Castillo et al. (2022), in their review of 79 studies, discovered that MTSS could support the links between quality professional learning designs and changes in educators' competencies and practices.

MTSS is highly relevant for students with learning disabilities, who receive most of their instruction in general education settings. Tiered systems have positively affected students with disabilities, including improved academic performance and reduced school suspensions and office

discipline referrals (Thomas et al., 2023). Thomas et al. (2023), in their explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, indicated that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) within MTSS has been proposed as a practical approach to inclusive and equitable education. Steed, Leech, and Shapland (2023), in their mixed methods study with 936 preschools through second-grade teachers, found that inclusion in their elementary school's social-emotional MTSS supports students' performance.

However, schools often struggle to implement the model with fidelity due to a lack of common language, consistent procedures, collaboration across various professionals in the district, and educator capacity to implement the multiple elements of an MTSS structure (Vetter et al., 2024). School districts across the United States continue to adopt MTSS to improve students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes through different models, such as Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS). Additionally, teachers can use the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), integrated with MTSS, to help students achieve their learning goals. IDEIA established PBIS as a model for supporting students with disabilities and reinforced these practices in subsequent reauthorizations.

For example, many high school students struggle to reduce risk factors and prevent the harms associated with substance use, violence, bullying, and related mental health problems (Bradshaw et al., 2021). Promoting a safe and supportive school environment has been a high priority in U.S. schools. The MTSS framework provides universal, targeted, and intensive evidence-based support to prevent the onset or escalation of academic and behavioral issues. Although previous studies indicate that MTSS positively impacts students and classroom settings, they primarily focus on training and coaching as professional learning interventions, which have been associated with improved educator learning and implementation fidelity (Castillo et al., 2024).

Additionally, previous studies indicated that MTSS helps teachers support students with special needs in their emotional and behavioral interventions and sustainability. For example, Bahr, Edwin, and Long (2023), in their study with a national sample of 598 school counselors and psychologists working as interventionists in MTSS-implementing schools, found that MTSS contributes to student achievement on statewide assessments, increases reading performance for both typically developing and struggling readers, enhances mathematics performance, and improves literacy for students speaking a language other than English.

Although previous studies indicate that MTSS helps teachers offer special support to students with emotional, behavioral, and academic issues, no existing literature has used MTSS for 3rd-grade students to contextually promote whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice. Specifically, there needs to be more research on how 3rd-grade teachers use MTSS to promote students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice. Many schools use an MTSS framework to promote social-emotional competence and

identify early social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. For example, teachers could use behavior interventions to help students achieve their learning goals. A social-emotional MTSS increases teachers' and administrators' capacity to use effective practices associated with positive social-emotional outcomes for students (Steed et al., 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to explore how U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers use MTSS for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice in context. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to enhance students' learning and school effectiveness. This study can contribute to the literature about how teachers explore MTSS for all students in the classroom for 3rd-grade students' holistic development, school sustainability, and promoting social justice. Specifically, three research questions guide this study:

1. What challenges do U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers face when using MTSS for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice?
2. What resources do U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers need to promote MTSS in the classroom for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice?
3. What strategies do U.S. 3rd-grade teachers use to promote MTSS for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice?

Literature Review

Despite the growing adoption of multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) in schools, research on its application in early elementary grades still needs to be completed. Previous studies have primarily focused on general outcomes, neglecting the specific challenges faced by 3rd-grade teachers (Bahr et al., 2023). This study addresses this gap by exploring how 3rd-grade teachers utilize MTSS to support students' holistic development. Specifically, it examines the impact of MTSS on students' overall personal growth, school sustainability, and the promotion of social justice.

MTSS and Student Whole Person Growth

Multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) support students' comprehensive development across various dimensions, including emotional, social, behavioral, academic, and spiritual growth. Teachers explore MTSS to ensure that students receive the appropriate level of support tailored to their unique needs (Zhang, 2024). At the core of MTSS is its tiered framework, which includes universal, targeted, and intensive interventions. This framework allows educators to address academic challenges and students' emotional and social well-being, fostering a holistic approach to education (Zhang, 2024).

MTSS plays a pivotal role in students' emotional and social development. By integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) programs within the universal tier (Tier 1), schools equip all students with foundational skills in emotional awareness, self-management, and interpersonal relationships (Espelage, et al.,

2024). For students needing extra support, targeted interventions (Tier 2) may include small group counseling sessions focusing on coping strategies and emotional expression. Intensive (Tier 3) interventions offer individualized support, such as one-on-one counseling or therapy, for students facing significant emotional challenges (Zhang, 2023). This tiered approach ensures every student can access the resources necessary for emotional growth and well-being.

Socially and behaviorally, MTSS fosters positive peer interactions and reduces disruptive behaviors through evidence-based practices like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). At the universal level, clear behavioral expectations and positive reinforcement strategies help establish a supportive and respectful school climate (Zhang, 2023). Targeted interventions involve social skills training for students who struggle with peer relationships or exhibit minor behavioral issues. Intensive interventions can include functional behavior assessments and individualized behavior intervention plans for those with more severe behavioral challenges (Zhang, 2023). These strategies improve social skills and peer relationships and create a more inclusive and harmonious school environment.

Furthermore, MTSS supports academic growth by providing differentiated instruction and targeted educational interventions. Universal strategies, such as high-quality, evidence-based curricula, aim to meet the needs of most students. Targeted interventions like small group instruction or tutoring are implemented for those who do not respond adequately (Hart et al., 2024). Intensive academic support is provided through individualized education plans (IEPs) or one-on-one tutoring for students with significant learning difficulties (Zhang,2023). This multi-tiered approach ensures that all students succeed academically regardless of their starting point.

In addition to these dimensions, MTSS can also support students' spiritual growth, although this aspect needs to be more commonly addressed in public education. Schools incorporating character education or values-based education programs within their MTSS framework can help students develop a sense of purpose, moral integrity, and empathy (Hart et al., 2024). Often integrated into the universal tier, these programs promote virtues such as kindness, respect, and responsibility (Zhang, 2023). Schools might offer targeted opportunities like meditation groups or reflective writing exercises for students who seek deeper exploration of their spiritual beliefs (Zhang & Koshmanova,2022). While intensive spiritual interventions are rare and typically handled outside the school setting, universal and targeted supports can significantly contribute to the holistic development of students (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2022).

Therefore, MTSS is not just about individual student growth but also about building a positive and inclusive school culture for students' whole person growth. By addressing emotional, social, behavioral, academic, and even spiritual needs through its tiered approach (Xie & Zhang, 2022), MTSS ensures that every student receives the appropriate level of support to thrive. This holistic focus enhances individual student outcomes and promotes a positive and inclusive school culture, ultimately contributing to the well-being and success of the entire student body.

MTSS and School Sustainability

Multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) are vital in maintaining school sustainability by fostering a resilient educational environment that adapts to diverse student needs, promoting efficient resource allocation, and enhancing overall school effectiveness. By systematically addressing academic, behavioral, and social-emotional challenges through a tiered approach, MTSS helps create a stable and inclusive school climate conducive to long-term success (Robinson et al., 2023). This structured framework ensures that interventions are data-driven, evidence-based, and scalable, enabling schools to meet the evolving demands of their student populations while maintaining high standards of education and care (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2021).

One of the most significant ways MTSS contributes to school sustainability is by emphasizing early identification and intervention. By continuously monitoring student progress and implementing universal screenings, teachers use MTSS to serve each student based on their needs and use school resources wisely to detect potential issues (Zhang & Koshmanova,2021). This approach could help teachers to use school resources effectively to help students toward their learning targets. For example, targeted interventions (Tier 2) and intensive support (Tier 3) are reserved for students who require additional help, allowing schools to allocate their resources more effectively. This tiered system optimizes the use of financial and human resources and minimizes the disruption to the overall educational process, promoting a stable and sustainable learning environment (Zhang & Koshmanova,2021).

MTSS catalyzes a culture of collaboration and professional development among educators, a critical factor in sustaining effective teaching practices and school improvement initiatives. By engaging teachers, administrators, and support staff in regular training and collaborative problem-solving sessions, MTSS cultivates a shared responsibility for student outcomes (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2021). This collective approach enhances the capacity of school personnel to implement interventions with fidelity and adapt to the diverse needs of their students. Furthermore, continuous professional development ensures staff remain well-versed in evidence-based practices and intervention strategies. This ongoing investment in human capital enhances the quality of education and contributes to the school's ability to sustain positive outcomes over time (Zhang & Koshmanova,2021).

MTSS strongly advocates for school sustainability by bolstering stakeholder engagement and fostering robust community partnerships. Successful implementation of MTSS necessitates transparent communication with parents, families, and community members, ensuring all of them are involved and contribute their talents for the school's sustainable growth

(Zhang & Koshmanova,2021). For example, teachers could use MTSS to support students' success, such as mental health services, tutoring programs, and after-school activities, further enriching the school environment (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2021). By harnessing these external resources, schools can extend their capacity to meet students' needs without overburdening their internal systems, thus maintaining a balanced and sustainable approach to education. By doing so, teachers could invite parents, staff, and students to share their learning experiences and to promote school programs for sustainable development for students' success (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2020).

Therefore, MTSS is instrumental in maintaining school sustainability through its structured, data-driven framework that optimizes resource allocation, fosters professional collaboration, and enhances stakeholder engagement. By addressing student needs proactively and involving the entire school community in the process, MTSS creates a resilient and adaptable educational environment. This holistic approach ensures the effective use of resources and builds a strong foundation for long-term school improvement and student success.

MTSS and Social Justice

Multi-tiered systems of Support (MTSS) are crucial in promoting social justice within educational settings by ensuring equitable access to resources, individualized support, and inclusive education for all students (Zhang, 2024). MTSS is designed to provide a continuum of support that addresses academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs through a tiered framework, which ensures that each student receives the appropriate level of intervention based on their unique requirements (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2020). MTSS's commitment to early identification and intervention for at-risk students is a crucial aspect of its proactive approach. Universal screening and progress monitoring tools are used within the MTSS framework to detect learning and behavioral issues early, allowing for timely and targeted interventions (Zhang & Koshmanova,2020).

This proactive approach is particularly beneficial for marginalized and underserved student populations that may be overlooked in a traditional educational model. By providing additional support and resources to these students, MTSS helps to close the achievement gap and prevent long-term academic and social disparities (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2020). Moreover, MTSS emphasizes data-driven decision-making, which helps to ensure that interventions are not biased and are based on objective criteria, further promoting fairness and equity in educational outcomes (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2020).

Furthermore, MTSS fosters an inclusive school culture that values diversity and promotes positive behavioral expectations for all students. The framework incorporates Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which focus on creating a positive school climate through consistent expectations and reinforcement of appropriate behavior (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2020). By embedding PBIS and

social-emotional learning (SEL) within the MTSS framework, schools can teach and reinforce skills such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution, which are essential for promoting social justice. These practices help students understand and appreciate diversity and prepare them to contribute positively to a multicultural society (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2020).

MTSS's promotion of social justice is not limited to the school environment. It extends to involving families and communities in the educational process, highlighting their crucial role. This collaborative approach recognizes the importance of cultural responsiveness and seeks to engage parents and guardians from diverse backgrounds as partners in their children's learning journey. Schools implementing MTSS often provide resources and training for families to support their children's academic and social-emotional development at home. By fostering strong home-school connections and valuing the input of all community members, MTSS helps to create an inclusive educational ecosystem that supports social justice. This holistic approach ensures that students not only receive the support they need within the school environment but also benefit from a broader network of community resources and advocacy (Zhang, 2023).

Consequently, MTSS is a transformative approach that significantly promotes social justice in schools. It does so by providing equitable access to support, fostering an inclusive school culture, and engaging families and communities in the educational process. Through early identification and targeted interventions, MTSS addresses the diverse needs of all students, helping to close achievement gaps and prevent long-term disparities. By embedding inclusive practices and social-emotional learning within its framework, MTSS cultivates a positive and respectful school climate. Additionally, the collaborative nature of MTSS ensures that all stakeholders are involved in promoting equity and advocating for the needs of every student, thereby advancing the cause of social justice within the education system. Therefore, previous literature shows that teachers could explore MTSS to help all students toward their learning goals effectively (Zhang, 2024).

Methods

Overview of Research Design

A descriptive qualitative research study was employed in this study to explore how 3rd-grade classrooms use MTSS to foster students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice in the United States. This approach enables an in-depth understanding and analysis of teachers' experiences, opinions, and perspectives to enhance student's learning outcomes and personal development (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Descriptive, thematic, and interpretative analyses were utilized to examine interview data from 3rd-grade teachers, allowing for the coding, categorization, and identification of major themes to address each research question (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Crotty, 1998; Guest et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2022). Consequently, the following conceptual framework guides this study.

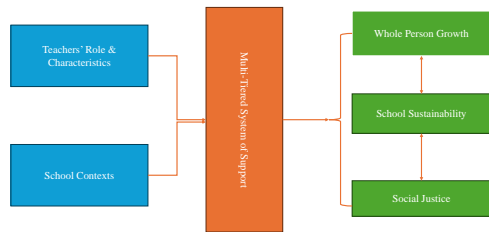### Conceptual Framework in this study

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework in this Study

Figure 1 illustrates an MTSS associated with teachers' roles and school contexts in the third elementary classroom setting in the United States to foster student whole-person student growth, promote school sustainability, and advocate social justice. MTSS is a comprehensive approach to providing support to all students in schooling (Vetter, et al., 2024). It has three tiers, including (1) Tier 1: Universal interventions for all students, focusing on high-quality instruction and proactive strategies to promote positive behavior and academic success. (2) Tier 2: Targeted interventions for students who require additional support, such as small group instruction or supplemental programs. (3) Tier 3: Intensive, individualized interventions for students with significant needs, often involving specialized services or one-on-one support. So, MTSS is a dynamic system continuously evolving based on data-driven decisions to address the changing needs of students.

Teachers in this study play a fundamental role through MTSS for students' success in an inclusive classroom environment (Graham, 2024). For example, teachers can use various instructions, such as mentorship, advocacy, facilitation, and conversation, to meet students' needs for students' progressive growth. In this framework, teachers' training and professional development are emphasized to enhance these competencies, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to support all students, particularly those at risk of academic failure or students with special needs.

Also, the school contexts in which a school operates significantly impact the implementation and effectiveness of MTSS by factors such as school culture, leadership, resources, and community involvement, which play critical roles. Schools must create environments that support collaboration among teachers, students, and parents (Godart & Neatby, 2023). This framework includes fostering a positive school climate, providing access to necessary resources, and promoting shared leadership. The contextual variables, such as socioeconomic status, diversity, and urban versus rural settings, influence how MTSS is applied and must be considered in its design and execution.

This study aims to foster students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice by exploring MTSS. Specifically, one of the primary goals of MTSS within this framework is promoting whole-person growth, which encompasses students' academic, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development. MTSS supports whole-person growth by providing comprehensive interventions that promote resilience, self-regulation, and a growth mindset.

Within this framework, school sustainability refers to the ability of schools to maintain effective practices and positive outcomes over time. Sustainable schools are characterized by adaptability, continuous improvement, and the capacity to withstand external challenges (Lange, 2023). MTSS, as a structured yet flexible approach, can be adjusted based on ongoing evaluation and feedback.

The ultimate goal of MTSS in this framework is to promote social justice in education. This involves ensuring equitable access to resources, opportunities, and support for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. By addressing systemic inequities and providing tailored interventions, MTSS helps to level the playing field, enabling all students to achieve their full potential. Social justice is a byproduct and a deliberate and inspiring outcome of MTSS, recognizing and addressing the unique barriers marginalized and underserved populations face (Osei-Kofi et al., 2022).

Therefore, this conceptual framework enhances teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes in diverse school contexts to achieve the overarching goals of whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice. Through a collaborative, data-driven, and equity-focused approach, MTSS enables schools to create inclusive environments that support the success and well-being of every student.

Participants

Table 1 shows a total of 12 (n=12) US 3rd-grade classroom teachers, including 6 males (n=6) and 6 females(n=6) from elementary schools across the United States. I recruited the participants with purposive and snowball sampling through semi-structured interview protocol and open-ended interview questions via Zoom, Webex, or phone call. The age of the participants ranges from 28 to 45 years old. Participants possess diverse educational backgrounds, hold bachelor's and master's degrees, and have teaching experiences ranging from 2 to 20 years. The selection of participants aims to capture a wide range of experiences and insights, ensuring that the findings represent diverse educational contexts. Finally, I randomly selected the participants among the potential participants.

Table 1
Demographic Participants of US 3rd Grade Classroom Teachers in this Study

Pseudo nyms	Age	Gender	Level of Education	Years of Experiences	School Type & Location
1. Julian	28	M	BA	3	Kalamazoo, MI, public school
2. Dylan	32	M	BS	7	Grand Rapids,

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Degree	Years	School
						MI, Christian School
3.	Elias	34	M	BS	9	Chicago, IL, Public School
4.	Jacob	35	M	MS	10	Houston, TX, Public School
5.	Maverick	36	M	BA	11	San Diego, CA, Catholic Private School
6.	Gabriel	40	M	BS	15	Boston, MA, Public School
7.	Isla	28	F	MAT	2	Grand Rapids, MI, Public School
8.	Eliana	30	F	BA	5	Grand Rapids, MI, Chinese Immersion School
9.	Nova	31	F	BS	6	Grand Rapids, MI, Chart School
10.	Madison	33	F	M.Ed.	8	Milwaukee, WI, Christian Private School
11.	Ivy	38	F	BA	13	Miami, FL, Public School
12.	Grace	45	F	BA	20	Chicago, IL, Public School

Data Collection

I gather all the signed consent forms from the participants per the ethical requirements of the human study. During the consent process, I invited the participants to have an average of 60 minutes of interviews via Zoom or Webex, and then I transcribed it verbatim. I conducted a one-on-one interview Through semi-structured and open-ended interview protocol from March 2022 to June 2023. Specifically, I used the interview questions to conduct a study and collected the primary data. After reviewing the previous studies and my experiences, validated by two teachers and one superintendent, I finalized the interview questions as a sample, as shown in Table 2. The thoughts of earlier scholars, such as Clark and Dockweiler (2020), Chapman and Hobbel (2022), Devi et al. (2024), Jimerson et al. (2016), and McIntosh and Goodman (2016), helped me create my interview questions. After I wrote my interview questions, I invited two teachers from elementary schools with more than ten years of working experience to give me comments, and then I revised the interview questions. After I revised based on the remarks of two teachers, I invited one school district superintendent to give suggestions about my interview questions. Then, I revised the interview questions to align with the superintendent's recommendations. After that, I finalized the interview questions with further confirmation from the two teachers and one superintendent. The sample of interview questions is shown in Table 2. Finally, my study reached 96% saturation in codes because of 12 interviews with random selection.

Table 2
Sample of Interview Questions

No.	Sample of Questions
Q1	Please talk about your educational background, teaching experiences, and anything related to multi-tiered systems of support, holistic education, school sustainability, and social justice in their personal views.
Q2	What do you understand about multi-tiered systems of support in your teaching experiences?
Q3	What are your views about using multi-tiered systems of support for students' whole-person growth?
Q4	What are your views about using multi-tiered systems of support for school sustainability?
Q5	What are your views about using multi-tiered systems of support for social justice in education?
Q6	What challenges do you think that you use multi-tiered systems of support for fostering students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice? And why?
Q7	What resources would you need while you use multi-tiered systems of support for fostering students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice? And why?
Q8	What strategies would you think are effective while you use multi-tiered systems of support for fostering students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice? And why?
Q9	How can you use multi-tiered systems of support in your teaching and helping students in their needs?

Q10   What do you understand the impacts and relationship between multi-tiered systems of support, students' whole-person growth, school sustainable development, and social justice?

Q11   What resources do you have in your current school if you use multi-tiered systems of support for students' whole-person growth, school sustainable development, and social justice in education?

Q12   Are there any concerns and questions I have not ask for and would you like to share them with me?

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

I used two cycle analysis approaches to analyze the verbatim interview data from 12 teachers within the computerized-aided qualitative analysis software, N-vivo 12. I used N-vivo to code, analyze, categorize, and emerge the major themes and categories aligned with each research question (Woolf & Silver, 2018; Zhang, 2024). Specifically, I used several steps to analyze the data. I firstly transcribed verbatim and uploaded the interview data into the N-vivo 12 for my analysis. I secondly read the transcripts multiple times to familiarize myself with the contents. Thirdly, I generate the initial codes using thematic, descriptive, and interpretative analysis approaches. Fourthly, I merged the major categories and identified the major themes that aligned with each research question. I fifthly reviewed the major themes and refined them to ensure they accurately represent the data, checking for coherence within themes and consistency across the entire dataset. Finally, I invited two scholars to validate my study's trustworthiness. One is a Ph.D. candidate whose major is qualitative research methodology. The other is a professor majoring in elementary education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Results

Results are presented per research question shown in the tables below.

1. **What challenges do U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers face when using MTSS for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice?**

Findings show that the 3rd-grade teachers in the U.S. elementary school face three major challenges. The challenges shown in Table 3 are (1) implementation difficulty, (2) meeting all needs for diversity and equity, and (3) data-driven decision-making.

Theme 1: Implementation Difficulty

One theme has three categories, and the three categories are (1) resource allocation, (2) professional development, and (3) time management. I cited quotes from participants to support this challenge.

Category 1: Resource Allocation

Julian said: "One of the biggest challenges we face is resource allocation. Ensuring every student has what they need is

tough, especially with limited budgets. Sometimes, I have to get creative with materials and use many of my resources."

Dylan said: "Absolutely, it feels like a juggling act trying to allocate resources. We often have to prioritize based on immediate needs, which means some students might miss out on things that could benefit them long-term."

Elias indicated: "I agree. The lack of resources can be frustrating. It impacts our ability to provide diverse and engaging learning experiences. I constantly look for grants or donations to fill the gaps."

Category 2: Professional Development

Grace stated: "Professional development is crucial, but finding the time for it can be challenging. There are always new techniques and technologies we need to learn, but we're already stretched thin."

Ivy said: "Yes, and sometimes the professional development isn't relevant to our needs. It would be more beneficial if the training were tailored to our classroom realities."

Madison indicated: "I've found that while professional development is essential, there's often a disconnect between what's taught and what's practical in the classroom. More hands-on, practical training would be helpful."

Category 3: Time Management

Nova said: "Time management is a constant struggle. There's always so much to do and never enough time. Balancing teaching, grading, and planning can be overwhelming."

Eliana said, "I've tried different time management strategies, but it's still challenging. The demands on our time are intense, and it's hard to stay on top of everything without burning out."

Isla stated: "Finding a balance between work and personal life is tough. We need more support in managing our workload effectively to maintain a healthy work-life balance."

Table 3
Major Themes and Categories for Teachers of Using MTSS Selected Codes with Frequency

Major Themes	Categories	Selected Codes with Frequency
Implementation Difficulty	Resource Allocation	Lack of sufficient funding (3), limited resource (7), inadequate access (3), insufficient staffing (5), intervention resource limitation (2)
	Professional Development	Limited training opportunities (3), lack of ongoing professional support (2), limited coaching (2), difficulty of keeping up-to-date research and method (2)

	Time management	Limited time (3), difficulty of scheduling (4), difficulty of balancing duty and service time (3), time pressure (3)
Meeting all needs for Diversity and Equity	Cultural Responsiveness	Adapting MTSS practice to be culturally responsive (2), culturally responsive and relevant (3), difficulty in addressing the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students (1), insufficient training in cultural competence (3)
	Equitable Access	Disparities in access to high-quality interventions (3), support all student's needs equally (2), difficulty in identifying and addressing bias (1)
	Inclusive Practice	Inclusive and accessible to all students (2), addressing the unique needs for English Language Learners (2), equal needs (5), pay attention to individualized support (3)
Data-Driven Decision-Making	Limited Capacity of Data Collection and Analysis	Data collection and analysis difficulty (2), lack of user-friendly data management system (1), insufficient data analysis skill (2)
	Data Utilization	Using data effectively to drive decision-making (3), data for personalized interventions (2), Difficulty in interpreting data (2), data for students' needs (3)
	Continuous Improvement	Maintaining a continuous improvement mindset (2), regularly updating and refining intervention strategies (2), ensuring all staff use data-driven practices (3)

Theme 2: Student Diversity and Equity

One theme has three categories, and the categories are (1) cultural responsiveness, (2) equitable access, and (3) inclusive practice. I cited quotes from participants to support this challenge.

Category 1: Cultural Responsiveness

Jacob said: "Being culturally responsive is vital. I try incorporating students' backgrounds into lessons to make learning more relatable and inclusive."

Maverick said, " understanding students' cultural contexts helps build stronger connections and foster a supportive learning environment."

Gabriel stated: "I've noticed that when we acknowledge and celebrate cultural diversity, students feel more valued and engaged. It's important to make this a priority in our teaching practices."

Category 2: Equitable Access

Grace said: "Equitable access is a huge concern. Some students don't have access to the same resources at home, like books or technology, which puts them at a disadvantage."

Julian indicated: "Definitely, ensuring equitable access is challenging but necessary. I try to provide materials and resources in the classroom to bridge that gap as much as possible."

Dylan stated: "I've seen firsthand how lack of access can impact a student's learning. We must advocate for our students and seek resources to support them."

Jacob indicated: "Creating partnerships with local organizations can also help. I've had success in getting donations and support from the community to ensure all my students have what they need."

Category 3: Inclusive Practices

Elias indicated: "Inclusive practices are essential to ensure all students feel welcomed and supported. Differentiating instruction to meet diverse needs can be challenging but is necessary."

Isla said: "I agree. It's important to create an inclusive classroom where every student can succeed. This requires continuous effort and creativity."

Nova stated: "Implementing inclusive practices involves more than just modifying lessons. It's about fostering an environment where all students feel safe, respected, and valued."

Theme 3: Data-Driven Decision Making

One theme has three categories, and the categories are (1) data collection and analysis, (2) data utilization, and (3) continuous improvement. I cited quotes to support this challenge.

Category 1: Data Collection and Analysis
Eliana said: "Data collection is a big part of our job. It helps us understand students' progress and areas where they need more support. However, it can be time-consuming."
Madison indicated: "Analyzing data is crucial for making informed decisions. We must be skilled in interpreting data to tailor our instruction effectively."

Gabriel stated: "While data collection is important, it's equally important to use that data meaningfully. "

Category 2: Data Utilization
Julian said: "Using data to drive instruction is key. It helps us identify what's working and what needs to be adjusted. However, we need more training on how to utilize data effectively."

Dylan indicated: "I've found that using data to inform my teaching practices has made a significant difference. It helps in personalizing learning for each student."

Elias stated: "Data utilization can sometimes feel daunting, but when done right, it's a powerful tool to enhance student learning outcomes."

Category 3: Continuous Improvement
Isla said: "Continuous improvement is part of the job. We constantly reflect on our practices and look for ways to improve based on data and feedback."

Nova stated: "Yes, the journey of continuous improvement requires a growth mindset. We must be open to change and willing to adapt our methods."

Madison indicated: "I believe in the power of continuous improvement. By regularly assessing and refining our practices, we can better meet the needs of our students and enhance their learning experiences."

1. **What resources do U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers need to promote MTSS in the classroom for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice?**

Findings show that U.S. 3rd grade classroom teachers need to have three types of recourses shown in Table 4, including (1) continuous training, (2) instructional resources, and (3) collaboration and support systems. Each theme has three categories; I have cited quotes to support this resource type.

Theme 1: Continuous Training
One theme has three categories: (1) cultural competency training, (2) behavioral intervention support, and (3) data-driven instruction workshop. I cited quotes from participants to support this resource.

Category 1: Cultural Competency Training
Julian said: "Cultural competency training has been incredibly beneficial. It's opened my eyes to the diverse backgrounds of my students and how I can better support them.

Grace indicated: "Absolutely, this training has been a game-changer. I now feel more equipped to address and respect the cultural differences in my classroom."

Dylan stated, "It's essential for creating an inclusive environment. I've learned new strategies to effectively engage all students."

Category 2: Behavioral Intervention Support
Elias said: "Behavioral interventions have helped me manage the classroom better, especially with students who need extra support."

Jacob indicated: "Implementing these supports has led to a noticeable improvement in student behavior and overall classroom dynamics."

Eliana stated: "I find them very useful. They allow for a more structured approach to managing challenging behaviors."
Gabriel stated: "Behavioral support training has equipped me with tools to create a positive classroom environment."

Category 3: Data-Driven Instruction Workshop
Nova said: "Data-driven instruction helps me tailor lessons to meet the specific needs of my students."

Madison indicated: "Absolutely, using data allows for more personalized and effective teaching strategies."

Ivy stated: "I think using data is a great way to assess students' progressive performance and also make sure to provide sufficient support."

Maverick said: "Data-driven instruction has made my teaching more focused and results-oriented."

Table 4
Major Themes and Categories of Resources for Teachers of Using MTSS Selected Codes with Frequency

Major Themes	Categories	Selected Codes with Frequency
Continuous Training	Cultural Competency Training	Ongoing Teacher Training (5), improving teacher diverse cultural background (3), inclusive lesson plans (3), multicultural classroom (2)
	Behavioral Intervention Support	Behavioral strategies (3), intervention (8), behavioral issues support (3)
	Data-driven instruction workshop	Using data for intervention (5), students' needs (5), data (10)
Instructional Resources	Differentiated Instructional Materials	Variety of instructional access (3), catering to different learning styles such as books (3), Technology-

		based resources (3)
	Social-Emotional Learning Workshop	Integrating social-emotional curriculum (3), promoting skills such as empathy (3), self-regulation (5), resilience (3)
	Culturally Relevant Curriculum	Curriculum materials that reflect the diverse cultural background (3), culturally valued education (2), culturally curriculum (3)
Collaboration and Support System	Parent and community engagement	Building strong partnerships with parents and community members (3), Linking between students and teachers (3), well-being both inside and outside of school (2)
	Interdisciplinary Teams	Working with other teachers and specialist (3), teamwork (5), group (3)
	Access to Mental Health Professionals	Access to school counselors (3), school psychologist (3), social workers (5), mental health support (3), crisis intervention (3)

Theme 2: Instructional Resources
One theme has three categories: (1) differentiated instruction materials, (2) a social-emotional learning program, and (3) a culturally relevant curriculum. I cited quotes from participants to support this resource.

Category 1: Differentiated Instruction Materials
Elias indicated: "Differentiated instruction materials have been essential in meeting the diverse needs of my students."

Jacob said: "Differentiated materials have transformed my teaching approach, making it more inclusive."

Grace stated: "These resources are key to addressing the individual needs of each student in my classroom."

Category 2: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Workshop

Elias said: "SEL programs have been instrumental in helping students develop essential life skills."

Madison indicated: "These programs teach students how to manage their emotions and build positive relationships."

Nova said: "I find SEL programs very effective. They help students navigate social challenges and improve their overall well-being."

Eliana indicated: "SEL initiatives have significantly impacted student behavior and interaction."

Category 3: Culturally Relevant Curriculum

Dylan said: "Implementing a culturally relevant curriculum has made the content more engaging for students."

Isla indicated: "I find it very beneficial. It promotes inclusivity and respect for different cultures."

Maverick stated: "A culturally relevant curriculum enriches the learning experience and broadens students' perspectives."

Theme 3: Collaboration and Support Systems
One theme has three categories, and the categories are (1) parent and community engagement, (2) interdisciplinary teams, and (3) access to mental health professionals. I cited quotes from participants to support this resource.

Category 1: Parent and Community Engagement
Julian said: "Engaging parents and the community has strengthened the support system for students."

Elias stated: "Involving parents helps reinforce learning and behavior expectations at home."

Grace indicated: "Community engagement provides additional resources and support for our students."

Category 2: Interdisciplinary Teams
Jacob said: "Working in interdisciplinary teams allows for a more holistic approach to student education."

Ivy indicated: "I find teamwork very helpful. It encourages teamwork and provides a broader range of support for students."

Dylan stated: "Interdisciplinary teams enhance our ability to create comprehensive educational plans."

Category 3: Access to Mental Health Professionals
Jacob said: "Having access to mental health professionals has been crucial for supporting students' well-being."

Gabriel indicated: "It's important for addressing the emotional and psychological challenges that students face."

Isla stated: "I find it very beneficial. It ensures that students receive the necessary support for their mental health."

Elias said: "Mental health professionals are essential for creating a safe and supportive learning environment."

1. **What strategies do U.S. 3rd-grade teachers use to promote MTSS for students' holistic growth, school sustainability, and social justice?**

Findings show that U.S. 3rd-grade classroom teachers use three strategies shown in Table 5, including (1) academic support, (2) social-emotional and well-being integration, and

(3) equity and inclusion. Each theme has three categories, and I cited quotes to support each strategy.

Theme 1: Academic Support

One theme has three categories, and the categories are (1) differentiated instruction, (2) tiered intervention, and (3) use of data for pedagogical decision-making. I cited quotes from participants to support this strategy.

Category 1: Differentiated Instruction

Julian said: "Differentiated instruction is key for me. I always start by assessing my students' individual needs and learning styles. For instance, some students might grasp math concepts quickly, while others need more hands-on activities. I use group work, one-on-one instruction, and personalized assignments to ensure everyone stays engaged and progresses."

Grace indicated: "I find it [differentiated instruction] crucial to tailor lessons to different learning levels. I use flexible grouping, where students work in different groups based on the subject or activity. This way, they can learn from each other and get the specific help they need. It's all about creating an inclusive environment where every student feels valued."

Elias stated: "I like to incorporate Technology into my differentiated instruction. Tools like adaptive learning software allow me to provide personalized practice for each student. It also gives me real-time data on their progress, which I use to adjust my teaching strategies."

Ivy indicated: "I use differentiated instruction by creating various learning stations in my classroom. Each station focuses on a different lesson aspect and caters to different learning styles. For example, one station might involve reading, another hands-on activity, and another might use Technology. This approach keeps students engaged and addresses their individual needs."

Jacob said: "For me, differentiated instruction involves many pre-assessments. Before starting a new unit, I assess students' prior knowledge and skills. This helps me plan lessons that meet them where they are and challenge them appropriately."

Category 2: Tiered Intervention

Grace said: "Tiered interventions are essential for supporting all students. I start with whole-class instruction and closely monitor student progress. For those who struggle, I provide small group interventions with targeted support. If students need even more help, I work one-on-one with them or refer them to additional resources."

Madison indicated: "I use a similar approach. After initial assessments, I group students based on their needs. Tier 1 is whole-class instruction, Tier 2 is small-group interventions, and Tier 3 involves individualized support. Regular progress monitoring helps me adjust these interventions as needed."

Isla stated, "Collaboration with other educators is crucial for tiered interventions. I work closely with our special education teacher and reading specialist to design interventions that address specific learning gaps. This team approach ensures that students receive consistent and effective support."

Maverick said: "I find that data is vital for tiered interventions. By analyzing assessment data, I can identify students who need extra help and determine the best type of intervention. Regular check-ins and progress tracking help me refine these interventions and ensure they're effective."

Gabriel stated: "Communication with parents is a key part of my tiered intervention strategy. I keep parents informed about their child's progress and the interventions we're using. This partnership helps reinforce learning at home and ensures that students receive consistent support."

Category 3: Use of Data for Pedagogical Decision-Making

Gabriel said: "Data drives my instruction. I regularly assess students through quizzes, observations, and standardized tests. This Data helps me identify strengths and weaknesses, plan lessons, and provide targeted support. It's a continuous cycle of assessment, analysis, and adjustment."

Eliana stated: "Data helps me understand my students better and tailor my teaching. I use formative assessments to gauge understanding during lessons and adjust my instruction in real-time. Summative assessments provide a broader picture of their progress and inform long-term planning."

Elias said: "Technology plays a big role in my data-driven instruction. I use educational software that tracks student performance and provides detailed analytics. This Data helps me create personalized learning plans and monitor progress. It's all about using information to enhance teaching and learning."

Ivy indicated: "Data isn't just about numbers. I also gather qualitative data through student feedback and observations. Understanding how students feel about their learning and their challenges helps me create a more supportive and effective learning environment."

Grace said: "I use data to set goals with my students. We look at their assessment results together and set achievable targets. This makes learning more transparent and motivates students to participate actively in their education. It's empowering for them to see their progress."

Table 5
Major Themes and Categories for Teachers of Using MTSS Selected Code with Frequency

Major Themes	Categories	Selected Codes with Frequency
Academic Support	*Differentiated Instruction*	*Tailoring lessons to meet the diverse needs of students (2), using a variety of instructional strategies (3), catering different types of learning styles (3), flexible grouping (5)*
	Tiered Intervention	*Providing varying levels of intervention based on student need (3), regular monitoring student progress (5), collaborating with specialists such as reading specialist (5)*

	Use of Data for Pedagogical Decision-Making	*Utilizing formative assessments (3), Using summative assessments (5), instructional assessment (3), appropriate interventions (3), data-driven discussions (3), improving instructional practice (5)*
Social-emotional Learning and Well-being Integration	*Integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into curriculum*	*Embedding social-emotional learning objectives in daily lessons (3), Teaching skills such as empathy, self-regulation, and cooperation (5), facilitating classroom discussions about social and emotional interactions (3)*
	Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS)	*Establishing clear behavioral expectations (3), reinforcing positive behavior (5), implementing a reward system (3), encouraging positive behavior (3), providing consistent consequences (5), Negative behavior (3)*
	Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment	*Fostering a sense of belonging (3), classroom community (3), building strong teacher-student relationships to support student well-being (4), peer support (3), collaboration among students (5)*
Equity and Inclusion	*Culturally Responsive Teaching*	*Incorporating diverse perspectives (3), varying materials into the curriculum (2), valuing students' cultural backgrounds in classroom activities (5), addressing stereotype (3), challenging biases in the classroom (3)*
	Family and Community Engagement	*Involving families in the educational process (3), regular communication (3), partnership (3), hosting community events (5), building school-community ties (5), providing resources and support to families (3), engaging children's education (2)*
	Addressing Disparities and Promoting Access	*Addressing gaps in access to educational resources and opportunities (3), implementing programs and initiatives to support marginalized students (3), advocating for equitable policies and practices (3), serving all students equally within school and district (2)*

Theme 2: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Well-being Integration

One theme has three categories, and the categories are (1) integrating SEL into curriculum, (2) positive behavioral intervention and support, and (3) creating a supportive classroom environment. I cited quotes from participants to support this strategy.

Category 1: Integrating SEL into Curriculum

Madison said: "Integrating SEL into the curriculum is my priority. I start each day with a morning meeting where we discuss our feelings and set positive intentions. Throughout lessons, I incorporate activities that promote self-awareness, empathy, and teamwork."

Nova stated: "I use literature and storytelling to teach SEL concepts. Books with strong emotional themes provide a great way to discuss feelings and social skills. We discuss characters' actions and emotions, which helps students relate these concepts to their lives."

Ivy indicated: "Role-playing activities are a big part of my SEL integration. Students act out different scenarios to practice problem-solving and empathy. This hands-on approach makes SEL concepts more tangible and helps students develop essential social skills in a safe environment."

Elias said: "I focus on building a classroom community that supports SEL. We set class norms together, and I model respectful and empathetic behavior. Regular check-ins and class discussions about emotions and relationships help reinforce these values throughout the school year."

Category 2: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Ivy said: "PBIS is about setting clear expectations and reinforcing positive behavior. I use a reward system where students earn points for following rules and demonstrating kindness. These points can be exchanged for small prizes or privileges. It motivates students to make good choices."

Julian stated: "Consistency is key in PBIS. I communicate my expectations and consistently follow through with rewards and consequences. I also involve students in creating our classroom rules, so they feel more invested in maintaining a positive environment."

Grace said: "I use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior. Praise and recognition go a long way in promoting a positive classroom culture. I make it a point to acknowledge students' efforts and improvements, no matter how small. This builds their confidence and motivation."

Jacob stated: "PBIS also involves explicitly teaching social skills. I have lessons focused on communication, conflict resolution, and empathy. We role-play different scenarios and discuss appropriate responses. This proactive approach helps

prevent behavioral issues and promotes a positive classroom climate."

Category 3: Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

Ivy said: "Building strong relationships is the foundation of a supportive classroom. I take the time to get to know my students individually, understand their interests and needs, and show that I care about them. This creates a sense of trust and belonging."

Elias stated, "I foster a supportive environment by promoting a growth mindset. I encourage students to view challenges as growth opportunities and persevere through difficulties."

Eliana indicated: "Creating a supportive classroom means ensuring every student feels heard and valued. I hold regular class meetings to discuss our feelings, address concerns, and celebrate successes. This open communication builds a strong sense of community."

Jacob said, "I ensure my classroom is physically and emotionally safe. This means having a welcoming, organized space and establishing clear expectations for respectful behavior. I also provide emotional support and guidance to help students navigate any challenges they face."

Ivy stated: "I integrate mindfulness practices into our daily routine. We start the day with mindfulness exercises like deep breathing or guided imagery. These practices help students manage stress, focus on the present moment, and create a calm and positive classroom atmosphere."

Julian said: "Inclusivity is a big part of creating a supportive environment. I ensure that all students feel included and respected regardless of their background or abilities. This involves differentiating instruction, celebrating diversity, and promoting kindness and acceptance."

Theme 3: Equity and Inclusion

One theme has three categories, and the categories are (1) culturally responsive teaching, (2) family and community engagement, and (3) addressing disparities and promoting access. I cited quotes from participants to support this strategy.

Category 1: Culturally Responsive Teaching

Dylan said: "Culturally responsive teaching starts with recognizing and valuing students' diverse backgrounds. I incorporate diverse perspectives into my lessons and use materials that reflect my students' cultures. This helps them see themselves in the curriculum and feel more connected to their learning."

Grace indicated, "I try to learn about my students' cultures and incorporate their experiences into our lessons. For example, I include stories and contributions from various cultures during history lessons. This enriches the curriculum and validates my students' identities."

Jacob stated: "Building relationships with students and their families is crucial for culturally responsive teaching. I communicate regularly with parents and invite them to share their cultural traditions with the class. This fosters a sense of community and mutual respect."

Isla said: "I use culturally responsive teaching by adapting my instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of my students. This includes using different teaching methods, such as storytelling, cooperative learning, and hands-on activities, that resonate with various cultural learning styles."

Madison indicated: "I integrate social justice themes into the curriculum to raise students' awareness of equity and inclusion. We discuss issues like discrimination, fairness, and activism. These discussions empower students to think critically and advocate for positive change in their communities."

Category 2: Family and Community Engagement

Elias indicated: "Regular communication with families is essential. I send out weekly newsletters, maintain an updated class website, and use apps to inform parents about what's happening in class. This helps create a partnership between home and school, which is vital for student success."

Nova said: "I organize family nights and community events where parents can participate in their child's learning. These events include workshops, cultural celebrations, and open houses. They provide opportunities for families to connect with the school and each other."

Julian indicated, "Home visits are a powerful way to engage with families. They allow me to build stronger relationships with parents and understand my students' home environments. This insight helps me tailor my instruction to meet their needs better."

Eliana said: "I involve parents in the learning process by inviting them to volunteer in the classroom, chaperone field trips, and share their expertise. This supports classroom activities and makes parents feel more connected to their child's education."

Jacob indicated: "Collaborating with community organizations is another way to support students. I partner with local libraries, museums, and businesses to provide additional resources and learning opportunities. These partnerships enrich the curriculum and help students connect learning to the real world."

Category 3: Addressing Disparities and Promoting Access

Julian said: "Addressing disparities starts with identifying and removing barriers to learning. I provide additional support for students who need it, such as tutoring, flexible seating arrangements, and access to technology. Ensuring every student has the resources they need to succeed is essential."

Ivy indicated: "I advocate for equitable access to educational opportunities by working with school administration to allocate resources fairly. This includes advocating for funding for special programs, extracurricular activities, and support services that benefit all students."

Elias stated: "Differentiating instruction is vital in promoting access. I use various teaching methods and materials to meet the diverse needs of my students. "

Isla said: "This involves challenging stereotypes, promoting respect for diversity, and addressing discriminatory behavior. Creating a positive and inclusive culture is vital for student success."

Nova indicated: "I collaborate with colleagues to share best practices and develop strategies for addressing disparities. Professional learning communities and peer mentoring are great ways to exchange ideas and support each other in promoting equity and inclusion in our classrooms."

Grace said: "I involve students in discussions about equity and inclusion. We talk about fairness, privilege, and how we can support each other. Encouraging students to think critically about these issues and take action helps create a more equitable and inclusive school community."

Those quotes from participants indicated that 3rd-grade teachers in the United States face three major challenges, need three major resources, and use three major strategies for students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and promoting social justice in schooling when teachers practice MTSS in their classrooms.

Discussion, Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendation
Discussion

Three significant findings are discussed. First, the 3rd-grade teachers in U.S. elementary schools face the major challenges of limited resources, time constraints, and professional development programs or knowledge-based building using MTSS for students' whole-person growth, school sustainability, and social justice. Several participants, such as Julian, Elias, Gabriel, Nova, and Grace, indicated that teachers use MTSS to foster students' strength in their ability in life and learning success. For example, Elias stated that he spent extra time helping students achieve academic performance and emotional balance outside of his classroom. Grace mentioned that she believes that MTSS can foster students to build a sense of social justice and personality growth. This finding is compatible with the previous studies. For example, Snyder and Witmer (2024) pointed out that teachers use MTSS for students' learning outcomes, which is positive, but they stated that teachers face limited resource challenges. Yang and Zhang (2023) further indicated that teachers must continuously improve their MTSS knowledge to foster students toward their learning goals. However, Zhang (2024) stated that teachers may need more resources supported by the school districts for their professional development. Singh and Khatri (2024) suggested that teachers must develop their time management skills, which could help them effectively support students in need. Therefore, teachers need to seek more resources to foster students toward their learning goals.

Second, the 3rd grade U.S. teachers need to receive culturally competent pedagogy, curriculum professional knowledge, and updated training with engagement among school stakeholders for students toward their learning goals and school sustainability. In this study, four participants, Ivy, Eliana, Jacob, and Julian, support this finding. For example, Julian and Ivy talked about similar points about teachers' need to strengthen their pedagogical knowledge and culturally responsive practices in fostering students to build their multicultural sense and awareness of social justice in their life journey. Jacob said teachers need to enhance their engagement skills through workshops, self-reflection, and conferences. This finding is compatible with the previous studies. For example, Hyter and Salas-Provance (2023) suggested that teachers must develop their culturally responsive pedagogy for students' learning outcomes and personality growth. Gay (2010) indicated that enhancing culturally responsive teaching is so important that teachers could help students develop their sense of belonging, social justice, and equity. However, findings in this study suggest that teachers from Prek 12 to college professors need to strengthen their engagement ability for students' whole-person growth, school sustainable development, and social justice promotion. Therefore, teachers must sharpen their MTSS and other essential knowledge and skills for school effectiveness and student outcomes.

Finally, findings suggest that teachers must use positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) and social-emotional learning (SEL) for students' well-being and learning outcomes. Several participants, including Elias, Isla, Eliana, Madison, and Ivy, indicated that teachers need to use PBIS and SEL associated with MTSS to foster students' well-being and characteristics formation. For example, Isla indicated that PBIS is a better practical skill for teachers to help students reduce their behavioral issues. Also, Eliana suggested that SEL could help teachers foster students' awareness of their actions, such as behavior issues. This finding is compatible with the previous studies. For example, Lloyd et al. (2023), in their survey study of 561 educators about how they use MTSS for students' intervention, suggested that teachers need to integrate of using different approaches, such as PBIS and SEL, for students' better outcomes. Castillo et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers can use PBIS for students' learning outcomes and personality formation. However, this finding suggested that teachers need to use various teaching and learning approaches to foster students toward their learning goals. Therefore, MTSS is a practical framework for teachers to encourage all students in need toward their learning objectives and school expectations.

Conclusion

The findings presented here delve into the unique transformative potential of the Multitiered System of Support (MTSS) in educational settings. It underscores the distinct effectiveness of MTSS in fostering holistic student development, enhancing learning engagement, and promoting equity and social justice. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of MTSS and its unique, multifaceted benefits.

First, teachers' use of MTSS has proven practical in providing tailored support to students with diverse needs. MTSS allows

educators to cater to individual learning styles, academic requirements, and emotional well-being. By implementing a tiered support framework, teachers can identify and address students' specific challenges, ensuring every student receives the necessary support. This proactive intervention aids in closing achievement gaps and fosters an inclusive learning environment.

Second, MTSS plays a crucial role in fostering students' holistic growth, including their sense of belonging. The professional development activities associated with MTSS help teachers foster students' whole-person growth. By nurturing these dimensions, educators can cultivate well-rounded individuals who are better prepared for the complexities of life.

Lastly, the research underscores the collaborative nature of MTSS implementation. It emphasizes the imperative for teachers to collaborate with principals and other school stakeholders to advance social justice and equity and eliminate biases in the educational landscape. This collaborative effort, which includes the audience, requires a focus on equitable practices and inclusive policies to create environments that support academic achievement and promote social and emotional well-being for all students.

In conclusion, MTSS effectively provides comprehensive support to students, fosters their holistic growth, and promotes equity and social justice. Adopting and refining MTSS practices and collaborative efforts between teachers, principals, and other stakeholders will sustain positive outcomes and ensure every student succeeds in an inclusive and supportive learning environment. The research presented here examines the transformative potential of the Multitiered System of Support (MTSS) in educational settings. It highlights MTSS's effectiveness in fostering holistic student development, enhancing learning engagement, and promoting equity and social justice. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of MTSS and its multifaceted benefits.

Implication and Recommendation

Based on the findings in this study of employing MTSS, educators can provide tailored support that enhances students' academic performance, emotional balance, and social justice awareness. Professional development and resource allocation are necessary, as teachers must continuously improve their MTSS knowledge to support students effectively. Culturally competent pedagogy and engagement with school stakeholders are crucial in fostering an inclusive environment that promotes whole-person growth and school sustainability. Also, using PBIS and SEL with the MTSS framework further enriches students' well-being and learning outcomes, indicating that a multifaceted approach is essential for student success.

While this study is comprehensive, it's essential to acknowledge its limitations. The sample size and demographic representation may restrict the generalizability of the findings. The focus on 3rd-grade teachers in U.S. elementary schools may only partially capture the range of challenges and successes experienced by educators in different grades or educational contexts. Furthermore, relying on self-reported teacher data may introduce bias, as participants might overestimate their use of MTSS or underreport challenges due to social desirability. The study primarily draws on qualitative data, which, while detailed, may require more statistical rigor and generalizability than quantitative studies to strengthen the research's validity.

Future studies should broaden the scope of the investigation, such as to have a more diverse and larger sample size of teachers across various grade levels and geographic locations. Longitudinal studies would be invaluable in examining the long-term impact of MTSS on student outcomes and teacher practices. Moreover, a deeper exploration into the specific types of professional development that most effectively enhance teachers' MTSS skills and knowledge would be of utmost value. Investigating the role of school administrators and other stakeholders in supporting MTSS implementation could also yield crucial insights into creating a more collaborative and supportive educational environment. Lastly, research into integrating emerging educational technologies within the MTSS framework could offer innovative approaches to meeting students' diverse needs, underscoring the need for continuous adaptation and improvement.

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