TEACHERS WITH LONGEVITY IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THEIR RETENTION
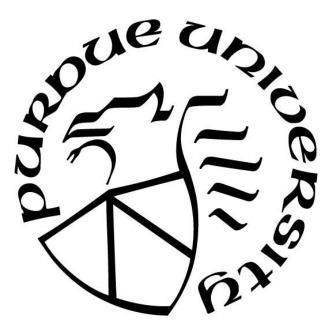
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I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Angie and daughter Emma, who have been constant

sources of love, support, and encouragement through the ups and down of the dissertation

process. They have helped keep me motivated to persevere through the rough times so that I

could achieve my dream.

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ABSTRACT

The education field is experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in high-poverty schools. All school districts struggle to find ways to prevent the increasing turnover rates in their schools; however, school districts serving impoverished populations have to deal with the impact of teacher turnover more frequently. This qualitative study focused on the lived experiences of four elementary school teachers with ten or more years of experience in Steele Community Schools, a high-poverty school district. This study focused on factors that have led participants to remain in their teaching positions. Using the framework of Fredrick Herzberg's two-factor theory, the researcher examined motivation and hygiene factors to determine which factors had the greatest impact in increasing a teacher's likelihood to remain in the profession; more specifically in high-poverty schools. The results of this study provides an understanding of the factors that impact a teacher's decision to remain in their position and may serve as a reference for school districts that continue to experience high teacher turnover. Through semi-structured interviews, data were collected from four veteran teachers with ten or more years of experience in their district. This study found that, of Herzberg's motivation and hygiene factors, coworker relations, salary/benefits, and the work itself had the greatest impact on a teacher's decision to remain in their teaching position in a high-poverty school. The study also brought to light a element outside of Herzberg's theory which has had just as great of an impact on teacher retention; the outside community. Based on the findings of this of the qualitative study school district leaders could potentially take a deeper look at factors that have been referenced in this study as having had a positive impact on teachers' decisions to remain in their positions in a high-poverty school and increase teacher retention.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

It is no secret that the education field has experienced a shortage of qualified teachers over the past several years. New teachers are coming into the profession eager to make their mark on the profession, advance student achievement, and make a difference for the future. Alarmingly, statistics show within the first five years of employment in the field of education, roughly 41% of new teachers decide to leave the profession completely (Perda, 2013). Of novice teachers in their first three years in education, six percent of these teachers leave during the actual school year (Walker, 2019). Even more astounding is the rate at which teachers leave high-poverty, low-income schools. Schools with high rates of student poverty experience a roughly 50% higher teacher turnover rate than schools with a low poverty rate (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). The financial burden of losing teachers has a significant fiscal impact on school districts. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) reported approximately half a million teachers leave education annually, coming with an astonishing price tag of nearly $2.2 billion per year. At a time when schools are expected to do much more with much less, staffing schools, especially high-poverty schools, has become very difficult.

Statement of the Problem

All school districts struggle to find ways to prevent the increasing turnover rates in their schools; however, school districts serving impoverished populations have to deal with the impact of teacher turnover more frequently. Research has shown the rate of teacher turnover is not equally distributed across all school settings (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Turnover disproportionately occurs in schools that serve larger populations of high-poverty students in urban settings (Atteberry, et al., 2017; Haynes, 2014). Turnover in high-poverty schools is approximately 50% higher than turnover in affluent schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). Schools serving a high-poverty population are often forced to fill their faculty with newer, inexperienced teachers, some of whom are hired with emergency licenses and are less prepared to deal with the growing needs of students in low-income schools. The U.S. Department of Education (2016) reports that while a relatively small percentage of teachers in high-poverty schools are not fully certified (3%), comparatively, this percentage is three times higher than the level of teachers that are not fully certified in low-poverty/affluent schools. This means teachers in high-poverty schools may be less qualified in areas such as experience, certification, and educational backgrounds than those teachers in more affluent schools (Jacob, 2007). Sorensen and Ladd (2018) support this finding, stating all schools affected by teacher turnover are likely to hire teachers who are not fully certified or qualified. However, high-poverty schools are more likely to hire teachers who are not fully certified and/or qualified due to more frequent, above average turnover. High-poverty schools are now tasked with recruiting and supporting newly qualified or non-qualified teachers more frequently than their more affluent counterparts.

With the ever-increasing school accountability measures, student achievement continues to be the measuring stick by which all schools are held accountable. Schools are racing to find ways to improve student achievement. One of the most influential factors tied to increasing student achievement is having, and retaining, fully certified teachers to lead classroom instruction. In Guin's (2004) study of 97 high-poverty elementary schools, low student achievement was moderately correlated with high teacher turnover; the study cited disruption to

curricular implementation, understanding of instructional focuses, and the negative impact on culture and morale as causal factors of decreased student achievement. Additionally, a 2013 study on the impact of teacher turnover on student achievement conducted by Ronfeldt et al. determined scores in both English and Language Arts (ELA) and math decrease more in years when teacher turnover is high as compared to years where turnover is less. Scores in math tended to be 8.2% to 10.2% of a standard deviation lower in years when there was a higher percentage of teacher turnover than the years where there was no turnover. Additionally, Ronfeldt et al.'s study noted even when the effectiveness of the leaving and entering teachers are equal, there will still be a negative impact on student achievement due to a disruptive organizational influence, impacting cohesion and community of the school. Persistent teacher turnover, regardless of teacher effectiveness, in high-poverty schools has a negative impact on student achievement, posing an astonishing challenge for sustained academic improvement in these schools (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ingersoll, 2001, 2004).

Significance of the Study

High-poverty schools have witnessed an increasing trend in teacher turnover and the problems associated with this phenomenon (Allensworth et al., 2009; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Marinell & Coca, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The general response by the school districts has been to focus on what they are doing wrong as a means of attempting to reverse the trend of teacher attrition; very rarely do they look at what they are doing right and examine why teachers are staying. With the cost associated with the support of a new teacher exceeding the $20,000 mark, school districts must invest in new methods for supporting and retaining the teachers in whom they have already invested (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; "What's the Cost", 2017). High-poverty schools must find ways to build on the

strengths that are keeping teachers in their buildings to decrease turnover rates in their schools. Scholars have suggested future research examine perceptions and beliefs of teachers staying in the profession (Dunn, 2008; Eick, 2002; Laffoon, 2012; Rinke, 2008). Furthermore, Dunn (2008) advocates for a closer analysis of the perceptions and beliefs of teachers staying in the profession as means to help strengthen relevant conditions. To increase teacher retention rates, districts should focus on why teachers are staying in the profession and how things that are within reasonable control of the district can be improved to reduce teacher turnover and the negative impact on students associated with the phenomenon.

With the increased need to staff high-poverty schools, efforts have largely focused on the recruitment process and bringing in promising teachers; far less focus goes into supporting and retaining teachers once they are brought in (Ingersoll & May, 2011; TNTP, 2012). Once teachers decide to leave, the inquiry turns to why teachers are leaving their positions. Typically, as a part of the exiting process, human resources or some representative of the school district conducts an exit interview with the outgoing employee. The exit interview allows the district an opportunity to gain feedback from an employee who is leaving. Often, these interviews tend to focus on the negative, e.g. what has gone wrong, and why the teacher is leaving. The value of the exit interview is limited in regards to the interviewee, as the employee has already made the decision to leave the district. If leaders understood the power of gaining input from their employees as to why they remain in their positions, they would have, and should have, been gathering this important information all along (Feinberg & Jeppesen, 2000; Holderness, 2016; June, 2009; Ryan, 2016). Instead of focusing on what went wrong with exiting teachers, districts should seek input from their current employees to enhance understanding of the factors impacting their desire to remain in their positions.

To add to the body of knowledge in the area of teacher retention, this study focused on a select population of elementary teachers who have remained in the profession and in the same school district for 10 years or more. This group has surpassed the novice teacher period when teacher attrition is most likely to occur. To gain a deeper understanding as to why teacher retention occurs, phenomenology was chosen as the mode of inquiry to "find what experiences different people have in common" (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 446). Through phenomenological inquiry, the researcher developed a better understanding of factors that impact teachers' decisions to stay in their current positions and what teachers' current districts are doing to make them stay.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study focused on the lived experiences of four elementary school teachers with 10 or more years of experience in high-poverty schools and reflects on the factors that have led them to remain in their positions. By interviewing veteran teachers who have remained in high-poverty schools, there were opportunities for greater exploration into key motivational factors that define the phenomenon of teacher retention.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1.   Why do teachers choose to stay in high-poverty elementary schools?

2.   What factors have the greatest impact on teachers' decisions to stay?

CHAPTER 2: SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Literature Review

Keeping good teachers in the classroom is becoming increasingly difficult for a variety of reasons. A study conducted by Darling-Hammond (2010) found high teacher turnover rates are being influenced by poor working conditions, including substandard facilities, lack of curriculum materials and supplies, and larger class sizes. The most frequently cited reason for teacher turnover in Darling-Hammond's study is a lack of administrative and district support during a teacher's first five years in the profession. In fact, a poll by the Public Agency Foundation found that when given the choice, roughly 80% of the teachers polled would prefer to work in a building with high administrative support over receiving a higher salary (Rochkind et al., 2007).

This study is grounded in Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory, stating job satisfaction created in employees is highly influenced by two factors: hygiene factors and motivation factors (see Figure 1). Hygiene factors, such as working conditions, quality supervision, and salaries, do not, by themselves, increase satisfaction, but could potentially cause employees to become dissatisfied in their position and leave if they are inadequate or not present in the working environment. Motivation factors such as achievement, interest, and recognition will motivate employees to perform at a higher level and give employees great satisfaction in their job (Herzberg, 1966). Herzberg suggested the job factors that satisfy workers and those that dissatisfy workers were not on a conceptual continuum and were mutually exclusive (Herzberg, 1966). He theorized the presence of two continua, each measured from low to high: job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. These continua act independently where eliminating job dissatisfaction will not influence job satisfaction and vice versa (Bressler, 2012). Given the constructs provided by Herzberg, commitment to an individual's job is heavily influenced and

correlated to job satisfaction rates. As the job satisfaction rates increase, the level of commitment

also rises (see Figure 2). Attrition is reduced and the employee bonds to the position (Wilkerson,

2016). Using Herzberg's theory, schools could decrease job dissatisfaction through increasing

the presence of hygiene factors, leading to teacher retention; however, this will not increase job

satisfaction (Bressler, 2012). A greater understanding of the hygiene and motivational factors

that increase teacher job satisfaction and likelihood to remain in the profession are necessary.

The purpose of this review of literature is to examine causes of teacher turnover and to focus on

factors and strategies that, when implemented correctly and with fidelity, would increase the

longevity of a teacher in their position and reduce the probability of teacher turnover.

Figure 1. Herzberg's two-factor theory. Examples of hygiene and motivational factors and the effect improving each factor has on employees (Kuijk, 2018).

Figure 2. Herzberg's two-factor theory in practice. This figure illustrates how hygiene and motivational factors influence employee job satisfaction (Kuijk, 2018).

Motivation Factors

Herzberg (2003) notes motivation factors (satisfiers) are intrinsic factors and, by their very nature, tend to have longer-term effect on employees' satisfaction in their current positions. Motivation results from recognition, achievement, advancement, personal growth, and the work itself (Herzberg, 2003). As the theory suggests, motivation factors cause positive job attitudes or job content leading to proper performance at the workplace. However, the lack of these factors does not prove high levels of dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 2011). McGowan (1981) noted increased job performance tends to be associated with job satisfaction stemming from the presence of motivation factors; however, the absence of motivation factors does not result in decreased performance. Instead, he continues, increased job satisfaction derived from motivation factors is found within the work itself.

Achievement

"Achievement," as defined by Herzberg (1966), is an individual's ability to meet set goals or objectives of an organization or individual. Individuals inherently want to achieve goals and be successful within their position. In efforts to increase job satisfaction, employees should be set up for success and utilized in a manner in which talents are highlighted and opportunities for failure are minimized (Syptak et. al., 1999). Employers should offer individuals timely feedback, ensure employees are cognizant of goals and standards, and adequately challenge individuals within their roles as a means to increase a sense of worth and overall job satisfaction (Syptak et. al., 1999).

Recognition

Herzberg (1966) identifies "recognition" as public acknowledgement of employees for successful completion of tasks or additional evidences of a job well done. In a study by Buchannan (1974), it was noted that the recognition of employees by their superiors for their contributions and successes within the organization positively impacted the employees' motivation and increased job satisfaction. Acknowledging an employee's work and public acknowledgement increases motivation and, in turn, commitment to the organization (Syptak et. al., 1999)

Work itself

Conceptually, the "work itself" can be defined as any activity or task required to successfully finish a job (Herzberg, 1966). When employees believe they have an important job coupled with a sense of self-direction, they are more likely to have an increase in motivation and job satisfaction (MasterClass, 2020). Work that is perceived as not being meaningful or

necessary tends to increase job dissatisfaction (Syptak et. al., 1999). To that note, employers

should work to show employees their work is meaningful and take steps to streamline or

eliminate tasks that are not necessary to the position (MasterClass, 2020; Syptak et. al., 1999).

Highlighting contributions and positive outcomes within organizations supports the

meaningfulness of the "work itself" to employees (Syptak et. al., 1999).

Advancement

"Advancement" is considered the potential for growth and development within an

organization and the probability of advancement over time (Herzberg, 1966). Increased

opportunities, the ability to participate in extended professional development, and increasing

skill sets and knowledge increases an employee's commitment to the organization and job

satisfaction (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Additionally, allowing opportunities for further education or

new titles reflecting achievement increases employee value and job satisfaction (Syptak et. al.,

1999).

Personal Growth

Herzberg (1966) identified "personal growth" as an individual's desire to progress and

the steps they take towards making said progress. Ownership and growth within an individual's

position increases motivation to do a job well as this gives the employee a sense of power and

ability to carry out a task (Syptak et. al., 1999). Additionally, constructive feedback and

meaningful constructive criticism, coupled with trusted interpersonal relationships and the ability

to communicate areas of improvement, will increase employees' desire to grow within the

position and organization (MasterClass, 2020). As growth within the position increases,

employees should be allotted opportunities for added responsibilities and challenging meaningful

work to support and add continued professional growth and motivation for the employee (Syptak et. al., 1999).

Hygiene Factors

Herzberg's study notes dissatisfaction is derived primarily from hygiene factors or extrinsic factors that include administration, coworker relations, policies/rules, work conditions, and salary (Herzberg, 2003). Hygiene factors are dependent on the conditional workings around the job itself that indirectly affect the job. Furthermore, hygiene factors can introduce motivation and are fundamentally necessary to avoid job dissatisfaction. Significant findings of the theory acknowledge motivation factors were sources of satisfaction; however, hygiene factors were sources of dissatisfaction (Taylor, 2008). Dissatisfaction derived from hygiene factors creates the potential for significant decreases in job satisfaction and performance. To that end, it should also be noted satisfaction with hygiene factors does not necessarily lead to motivation. Dissatisfiers are environmental and enclosed within the doing of work and not dependent on the work itself (McGowan, 1981). It should be noted hygiene factors cannot be neglected, as this would develop generally unhappy employees and compromise an organization's success (Syptak et. al., 1999).

Working Conditions

Working conditions, as defined by Herzberg (1966), are the basic surroundings in an organization that develop the physical and psychological comfort of an employee. Employers should not underestimate the effect the environment has on the employees, their pride, and their level of job satisfaction (Syptak et. al., 1999). Machinery and tools that either ease the functions of the job or ensure safety in the workplace are also components of the working conditions. Proper lighting, adequate temperatures, and appropriate cleanliness create a more comfortable

environment and allow more efficient work, thus increasing job satisfaction (Yousaf, 2019).

Working conditions that increase the safety and comfort levels also have a positive impact on job

satisfaction, which in turn motivates the employee (MasterClass, 2020).

Coworker Relations

Coworker relations, as defined by Herzberg (1966), are the relationships one has with

their coworkers. Herzberg continues by defining relationships as interactions between an

employee and another individual of equal stature within the organization. Positive interpersonal

relationships help develop teamwork and collaboration, which have been cited as having a

positive impact on job satisfaction (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000).

Policies and Rules

Herzberg (1966) defines "policies and rules" as set organizational standards developed to

meet and accomplish tasks. Ensuring policies are clear to employees and implemented fairly

amongst employees eliminates frustration (Syptak et. al., 1999). A study by Ahmed et al. (2010)

revealed when an employee was cognizant of and fully understood organizational policies, they

were more motivated than those who were not presented with policies or to whom they were

unclear. Additionally, when policies are applicable to every employee and all employees are

aware of this, job satisfaction increases (Yousaf, 2019). While policies and rules will not

increase employee satisfaction, unfair policies or ones that are not applied equally will increase

job dissatisfaction (Syptak et. al., 1999).

Supervisor Quality

Supervisors are the managers and/or bosses within the organization. Herzberg (1966) notes that an employee's relationship with administration has an impact on job satisfaction. The more positive the relationship that administration has with employees, the higher the job satisfaction. A mutual, cordial relationship between administration and employees motivates in-depth communications relating to the position and produces greater results and execution for tasks, which leads to greater job satisfaction (Yousaf, 2019). Conversely, working relationships that exemplify the supervisor's lack of competency greatly increases job dissatisfaction (MasterClass, 2020). Given the impact that administration has on job satisfaction, organizations should make careful decisions and considerations when appointing an administrator (Syptak et. al., 1999).

Salary

Salary is the amount of money paid and additional benefits associated in the compensation given to an employee for their work (Herzberg, 1966). Adequate compensation for an employee's work impacts an organization's ability to lessen job dissatisfaction (MasterClass, 2020). Salaries are often the factors that employees use to determine their value within an organization and in comparison to similar organizations. To this note, job satisfaction and commitment to an organization increases when an employee believes that their compensation is sufficiently similar to their peers and to what is being offered by similar organizations (Robbins, 2001). Herzberg (1966) noted in his original study that he did not consider salary as a highly motivational factor but did study the importance of salary on job satisfaction in his later studies.

Teacher Turnover

Research has shown that one of the greatest phenomena facing public education today, especially in high-poverty, low-income schools, is teacher turnover. It should be noted that there are attritional causes that contribute to teacher turnover such as taking a job in a different profession or for reasons of a personal means; i.e. health, children, retirement, etc. (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). Research has shown, however, that less than 17% of total turnover, especially in high-poverty, low-income schools, is due to teacher retirement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Henke et al., 2000; Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher turnover is 50% higher in high-poverty, low-income schools than in low-poverty, high-income schools and, as a whole, 30% of new teachers leave the profession in their first five years of teaching (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). With the increased pressure and, at times, lack of support, these teachers leave their position. In studies conducted of novice teachers, the following were cited as reasons for leaving the profession: salaries, isolation, student discipline problems, inadequate administrative support, minimal support from colleagues, lack of parent involvement, and students who lack motivation (Certo & Fox, 2002; Johnson et al., 2005). In addition, novice teachers have noted that working conditions outweighed salaries as a cause for turnover (Darling-Hammond 2010; Loeb & Page 2000; Sorensen & Ladd, 2018). Though districts have little control over retirements and health-related issues, they do have control over workplace circumstances. Novice teachers leaving school districts impose a financial burden as they walk away from their positions with investments such as training, professional development, and mentorship that districts will not be able to recoup (Wilson, 2011). Teachers who leave their positions cost districts an average of $20,000, in addition to salary, to replace them (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; "What's the Cost", 2017). Though there are factors of teacher turnover that cannot be prevented, a focus should be placed on what is causing teachers

to leave the profession. "Policymakers, educational administrators, and the public at large all understand that the quality of the teaching force is essential to improving student achievement, and research supports this common sense notion" (Liu et al., 2008, p. 296). Districts, especially those serving a high-poverty population, need to find and implement the best practices and strategies to support and retain teachers in their classrooms. Strategies that research has shown to predict teacher retention revolve around school culture/climate, support, and induction or mentoring (Viadero, 2018). Increasing focus on strengthening and improving these areas may increase school districts' probability of reversing the trend of teacher turnover and keep teachers in the classroom.

Teacher Shortage

With the increased rate of teacher turnover and attrition in high-poverty, low-income schools, districts are tasked with the daunting process of attempting to recruit and retain novice teachers to fill vacancies. The astonishing rate of teacher turnover has led to increased levels of demand that have not been seen in years, and the rate of demand continues to rise. Sutcher et al. (2016) noted that there was a 20% increase in the demand for teachers from 2015 to 2016. If the trends continue, they predict a demand for over 316,000 teachers by 2025. Furthermore, Sutcher et al. cite a 35% decline of enrollment in teacher preparation programs, noting that by 2025 there will be fewer than 200,000 new teachers available to fill the predicted 316,000 vacancies, leaving a shortfall of 116,000 teachers. As Ingersoll (2001, 2011) notes in his research, one of the major causal factors of teacher shortages is the high level of teacher turnover, whether through attrition or transitions between schools or districts, which increases the demand for teachers. For this reason, novice and non-traditional teachers are being recruited to low-income schools to fill positions that have been vacated. In a 2016-2017 national study by the Learning

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Policy Institute (2018), students in low-income, high-minority schools are almost four times as likely to have a classroom teacher who is uncertified or lacks proper credentials at a 3.7:1 ratio. Additionally, looking at teachers who have proper certification, it was found that students in low-income, high-minority schools were twice as likely to have an inexperienced teacher as their high-income, low-minority counterparts. Quite often the teachers who are filling these positions are either straight out of college, lacking any real and substantial classroom experience, or have taken a non-traditional path in which their background is from a non-education profession equipped with a bachelor's degree and an emergency license. In a study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), 8.8% of current teachers are not fully certified, and only 68.5% have an educational background in their current assignment area. The EPI study also found that 17.1% of current teachers took an alternative route into education (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Though these new teachers come to the classroom filled with ambition and a desire to make a change, many are coming in ill-equipped to deal with the pressures that are inherent in teaching in the high-need, high-pressure environment that exists in high-poverty, low-income schools.

School Culture/Climate

As districts reflect on the identified causes of teacher turnover, they are met with the daunting task of developing a positive culture and climate within their schools. Schools that promote a positive culture where teachers are encouraged to develop together, increase self-efficacy (an individuals' belief that their abilities will meet goals), and are intrinsically motivated will increase the likelihood of teacher retention (Moran et al., 2001). In an *Education Week* survey of 500 nationally represented educators, 17% ranked a positive school climate/culture the top consideration for staying in a position, ranking just below leadership (Viadero, 2018). Schools that promote and operate in a culture of competition and comparison and do not allow

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for weaknesses tend to lower teachers' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, leading to an increased likelihood of teacher turnover (Moran, et al., 2001). Additionally, teachers whose self-efficacy decreases tend to experience burnout more frequently than teachers who see an increase in their self-efficacy (Evers, et al., 2002). Coupling a support culture with a culture centered around a clear mission and vision, in which teacher development is encouraged, stimulates and increases the intrinsic motivation of teachers, decreasing the potential for teacher turnover (Minarik, et al., 2003). Repeated teacher turnover, however, impacts building leaders' ability to develop the continuity and consistency needed for meaningful, professional relationships amongst staff and to develop and strengthen a positive school culture that is conducive to student learning and achievement (Hudson, 2013). Additionally, DeAngelis et al. (2013) reference research showing that schools with more challenging conditions (i.e., low-income, low-performing academically, lacking resources, non-White students, unsupportive climates) also face a greater challenge in recruiting and retaining teachers than schools without challenging conditions.

Leaders who can overcome this obstacle can develop a culture and climate that will increase job satisfaction and potentially reduce the teacher turnover in their buildings. Administrative leaders who have decreased teacher turnover have been cited as producing greater "support and leadership, good student behavior, positive school climate, and teacher autonomy as working conditions associated with higher teacher satisfaction" (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006, p. 45). Additionally, Mittapalli's (2008) research supports this finding by suggesting that teachers are more satisfied in their position and are more likely to stay in their position when then they encounter adequate student motivation and support from parents, a positive school environment, fair class sizes, and student discipline. Exposing teachers to high

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satisfaction and supportive cultures allows for positive teacher development and increased job

satisfaction (McCormick, et al., 2006).

Collaborative Environment

No one thrives when they feel like they are on an island by themselves. A culture of

support and collaboration is essential to having worth and meaning in a job. Working in isolation

is proven to be unfavorable to job satisfaction and commitment (DeLay & Washburn, 2013).

Conversely, being a part of a collaborative team that brainstorms, shares strategies, and has

relevant professional conversations increases teachers' sense of job satisfaction and belonging. A

collaborative environment can increase teacher career commitment and job satisfaction (DeLay

and Washburn, 2013). In a study of 641 nationally represented first-year teachers, Rochkind et

al. (2007) discovered that ninety-three percent of those polled felt that increased collaboration

and professional development would improve teacher quality and job satisfaction. Providing

opportunities for teachers to collaboratively exchange experiences and expertise makes a positive

contribution to teacher competence and self-efficacy amongst both novice and veteran teachers

(Gaikhorst, et al., 2017; Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010). Additionally, providing teachers with the

opportunity to grow and strengthen teaching practices and allowing intentional opportunities to

reflect with other educators on their experiences increases the support of novice teachers, thus

increasing the likelihood of teachers remaining in the profession (Fulton & Britton, 2011; Howe,

2006).

Opportunities for collaboration do not happen by chance. Schools that strategically

implement practices that promote collaboration, such as common planning time and an

instructional collaboration schedule, positively impact teachers and reduce the risk of turnover

(Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In a study conducted by Williams et al. (2001), it was noted that

collaborative school cultures are more likely to meet the needs of novice teachers than schools where teachers do not collaborate and work in isolation. Novice teachers in the study noted a sense of positive development and greater job satisfaction when collaborative practices are present. Additionally, Hirsch (2005) notes that teachers who experience collaborative opportunities within the school setting coupled with increased support from their fellow teachers and building leaders tend to remain in their position longer that those who do not receive these opportunities. DeLay and Washburn (2013) support this claim by noting that veteran teachers were more likely to remain in the profession when intentional collaboration was imbedded in their experiences. Furthermore, through this intentional collaboration, teachers expanded their stockpile of resources, while decreasing feelings of anxiety and incompetency in their roles. Certo and Fox (2002) support this concept, citing collegiality and collaboration amongst staff as a low-cost, high-return strategy for retention of highly qualified teachers. In a study of veteran teachers, those who experienced collaborative environments expressed less desire to leave their position and noted that their desire to remain increased each year (DeLay & Washburn, 2013).

Administrative Support

As novice teachers enter the profession, the immediate focus of schools is to offer much-needed administrative support to teachers in their first years. Administrative support can roughly be defined in a variety of forms, from providing meaningful professional development opportunities for staff to lessening the impact of district and state mandates (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). "School leaders play an important role in shaping building-level factors that can affect new teachers' attitudes toward the profession and their sense of efficacy as educators" (Brown & Wynn, 2007, p. 668). Additionally, building administrators play the most significant role in developing a positive climate that is supportive of teachers' work (Jones et al., 2013;

Pogodzinski et al., 2012). Investing time and effort into novice, or new-to-position, teachers is essentially a given for districts attempting to reverse the cycle of teacher turnover. However, there is a fine line between providing novice teachers with an appropriate amount of support and flooding them with an overwhelming number of trainings, initiatives, and expectations. Michel et al. (2011) suggested that when an individual is new to a position or role, they may perceive their workload as daunting. This creates a feeling of a lack of time to complete all assigned tasks, which creates role overload, adding undue stress to the individual teacher who is new to their role (Michel et al., 2011). Simons (2013) highlights notions of over-supporting new teachers by requiring unpaid, lengthy orientations that outline district expectations, enrollment in district training programs, and other initiatives that all teachers are expected to participate in as overburdening contributors to the departure of novice teachers. In a study conducted by Buchanan et al. (2013), new teachers noted that they did not intend to leave the profession due to difficulties they were having in the job itself, but rather, they intend to leave because of the quantity of work that was being expected of them. Darling-Hammond (2006) supports this notion by stating that a source of teacher dissatisfaction in their positions is the perception of an increasing workload, particularly in non-teaching responsibilities. For novice teachers, this perceived factor forms a strong predictor of intention to leave the profession.

At times, too much of the focus of administrative support is placed on first-year teachers, which results in overlooking teachers who are more experienced. Administrative support offered to the entirety of the building helps to develop a culture of professional development, trust, and support amongst all staff, not just new or novice teachers. Brown and Wynn (2007) found that schools leaders who are accessible, establish trust between themselves and their staff, know the teaching staff, and are proactive in their approach to leading their buildings reduce their turnover

rates and retain teachers at a higher rate than disconnected building leaders. Additionally, these leaders have a clear vision for the direction of their buildings and involve stakeholders, more specifically teachers, in their decision-making process. From Smits (2009) study, he concluded teachers who decided either to move to a different teaching position or to leave the profession altogether cited poor administrative support and poor working conditions as the rationale for their decision.

Teacher Induction and Mentoring

New teacher induction programs are a cost-saving measure to not only prevent teacher turnover, but also to save districts the cost of onboarding and training teachers each year. Having strong support structures in place contributes to the effectiveness of an induction program and, in turn, strengthens the likelihood of retaining novice teachers (Assunção Flores, 2004; Devos et al., 2012; Howe, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teacher turnover, especially from teachers in their first through fifth year, is an extremely costly problem facing districts. Though there is not a consistent price tag on the implementation of a new teacher induction, $50,000 to implement was the highest price tag found. Other findings show that the average cost per teacher is approximately $6,505 per teacher. Furthermore, "a 2007 analysis determined that the return on investment of a teacher induction program after five years was $1.66 for every dollar spent" ("Increasing Effectiveness of Educator Induction Programs," 2013, p. 4). With such a high price tag on teacher turnover and a proven return on investment with new teacher induction programs, districts should work towards a proactive approach to support the needs of their new teachers over their first five years, not just years one and two. In a time when funds are being cut and schools are asked to do much more with less, investing in new teachers and new teacher

induction programs makes much more financial sense than having to fund the revolving cost of replacement due to attrition.

In a study conducted by the New Teacher Center, Liam Goldrick, Director of Policy, reviewed policies from all 50 states regarding requirements for new educator induction and/or mentoring of new teachers. In his research, Goldrick (2016) noted that 21 states do not have a policy that requires a mentoring or induction program be available for new educators. In addition, 11 states require only a one-year mentoring program, with several dropping this requirement all together. With teacher turnover on the rise, states should adopt policies that provide support for novice teachers. With research suggesting that comprehensive, multi-year induction programs reduce the rate of turnover of novice teachers, accelerate the professional growth of new teachers, provide a positive return on investment, and improve student learning (Goldrick, 2016), districts should invest in their teachers by implementing a new teacher induction program.

A teacher induction program, as defined by Wong (2004), is a two- to three-year-long support process that is a system-wide, comprehensive training that will become a seamless part of a lifelong professional development program to retain new teachers and increase their effectiveness. Induction programs are developed by school districts to provide new teachers with the support and skills needed to become effective educators in the future. Induction programs should be developed in accordance with the district's mission and vision and promote teachers' desire for intrinsic lifelong learning and development. Mentoring is a strategy that coincides with the teacher induction program; however, when conducted alone, it is not the solution to avoiding the nation's increasing teacher turnover rate.

Induction programs and mentoring programs are often, at times, used interchangeably. This cannot be further from the truth. Mentoring is the process of a master teacher guiding a new teacher during their probationary period through observation, feedback, and instructional support (Pirkle, 2011). This definition alone implies a multitude of things. A mentor/master teacher is that: a teacher. According to Pirkle, mentors are busy teaching, attempting to meet academic goals, and working to close the achievement gap. They cannot observe and offer the feedback and instructional support that a new teacher requires. Though mentoring is a key component of an induction program, mentoring alone will not help with teacher turnover amongst first through fifth year teachers. Wong (2004) alludes to the fact that mentors play a critical role within the induction program, but they must be used in addition to it, and to support the integral components that make up an effective teacher induction program. Jokinen and Valijarvi (2005) support this claim in adding that mentoring, within the induction program, can reform school culture if it becomes a contributing factor in creating a culture of commitment and promotion of teaching, learning, and caring.

New teacher induction programs, offering multiple years of support, are an integral piece in the development of new teachers. While each school district will need to formulate an induction program that meets the needs of their district, there are several foundational components that the induction program should be developed around. The induction model consists of two foundational components consisting of learning and development in the school setting and peer meetings within the district, led by developed district administrators, which provides a whole organizational support for the new teachers (Eisenschmidt, et al., 2013). According to Wong's research (2004), he outlines three critical components of a comprehensive induction program:

1) Comprehensive approach: Everyone is vested in the program from the leadership down to the new teachers. Roles are structured, rigorous, and highly monitored for fidelity.

2) Professional learning: Carefully planned out and cohesive professional development calendars are set. Focus should be placed on delivering professionalism and growth to their teachers and administrative staff.

3) Collaboration: Success in any organization revolves around open communication and collaboration. A culture of shared experiences, practice, strategies, and tools is a huge component in a successful induction program.

Mentoring alone will not meet the needs of new teachers. Districts need to consider the value of implementing a three- to five-year induction program as a means to address new teacher turnover and save on the cost of replacing new teachers every year.

Conclusion

With teacher turnover rates continuing to rise, especially in the new teacher and low-income school population, school districts are responsible for replacing teachers at a high cost to each district. From a financial standpoint, school districts cannot afford the costs tied with the constant replacement of staff. While districts will probably not eliminate teacher turnover, looking into strategies that support teachers and keep teachers in their current positions could, in the long run, be instrumental in reducing teacher turnover, especially in high-poverty schools. Providing students with highly effective teachers year in and year out is essential to the functioning and success of a school. School districts must consider implementing and supporting programs that have been proven to retain and improve the quality of teaching in school, especially the hard-to-staff, low-income schools.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To understand underlying influential factors that lead to teacher retention and why teachers choose to stay in high-poverty schools, the phenomenology research method was chosen as the mode of inquiry. Phenomenology can be defined as "the description of one or more individuals' consciousness and experience of a phenomenon" (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 444). Additionally, Johnson and Christensen explain phenomenology focuses on unique experiences of an individual and how they recall said experiences in their own words. Phenomenological research looks to focus on the common, never changing structure of human experiences, or essence, and how these experiences or essence are shared in specific groups. The research tries to determine an understanding of "essences and accordingly its treatment of every problem in an attempt to define an essence, the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956, p. 59).

Phenomenology, as a mode of inquiry, has a few different variations. This study focused on participants' real-world experiences, views, and interpretations formed from their lived experiences as veteran elementary teachers in a high-poverty school district. Through phenomenological inquiry, a greater understanding of factors that have led to teacher retention and what the school district is doing right in terms of teacher retention were identified. This research served as an investigation into teacher experiences throughout their career that potentially influenced their decision to remain in the profession and focused on multiple examples of the phenomenon: "finding what experiences different people have in common" (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 446).

Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory describes the theoretical framework that grounded this study. The framework proposes that job satisfaction created in employees is highly influenced by two factors: hygiene factors and motivation factors. Hygiene factors, such as working conditions, quality supervision, and salaries, do not, by themselves, increase satisfaction, but could potentially cause employees to become dissatisfied in their position and leave if they are inadequate or not present in the working environment. Motivation factors such as achievement, interest, and recognition will motivate employees to perform at a higher level and give employees great satisfaction in their job. This model will be used as a rubric during the analysis of teachers' perceptions of past and current experiences in the position, as this framework may have influenced teachers' decisions to stay in the profession.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, the researcher was positioned as an interviewer and the instrument for gathering and analyzing data. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher had the adaptability to ask clarifying questions, or restructure questioning to pursue meaning of participant answers. According to Chinn (2007), as a qualitative researcher, one must be cognizant of personal biases and sympathetic to the elements involved during the interview process, as all may have some type of impact on the study itself. Additionally, the researcher must have the ability to build rapport and have pronounced listening, verbal, and written communication skills to be successful.

As the interviewer, the researcher entered the researcher role as a middle class, white male with over 15 years of experience in high-poverty education settings. Nine of the 15 years were spent in the classroom setting in a high-poverty school setting in roles including: Title 1 instructional assistant and classroom teacher. For the past eight years, the researcher worked as a

building-level administrator in two high-poverty school districts. In the researcher's time as an administrator, he witnessed high teacher attrition rates within the schools. As a part of the administrative team, focus has been placed on supporting and retaining teachers new to the district based on what the administrators feel that the teachers' needs are. Work has yet to be done to determine which factors influence teacher attrition within the district or to determine how we can better support these novice staff members. Coming into the research as an employee of a district with similar needs, it was necessary to disclose that the data were being collected with complete anonymity to create a free-flowing and honest discussion. The researcher placed himself in a position where he had to disclose any preconceived notions about what he believes the needs are and to become as impartial an interviewer and interpreter as possible.

Selection of Setting

Due to regulations that were set forth due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted virtually through the WebEx video conferencing platform. Virtual interviews offered participants the flexibility of location and comfort of a neutral environment. The interviews took place with teachers from the elementary schools of Steele Community Schools, a high-poverty school district located in a small urban community in Michigan. (Note: Steele Community School was used as a pseudonym for anonymity purposes). The district educated approximately 1,382 students in the 2018–2019 school year, with approximately 63% of the students eligible for free or reduced lunches at that time. Sixty-six percent of students in the district were considered economically disadvantaged, which categorized the district as a high-poverty school district. Based on the last Accountability Scorecard (2015-2016), Steele Community Schools received a yellow rating, receiving 75% of the status points possible (41/54) on the state accountability scorecard. Points on the accountability scorecard are awarded when proficiency or proficiency

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improvement targets in subject areas are met by the various subgroups outlined on the scorecard, i.e., all students, bottom 30%, Hispanic of any race, white, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities. Over the past three years, the Steele Community Schools have averaged a teacher retention rate of 91% at the elementary level, surpassing the three-year retention average of schools of similar demographics by nearly ten percent (82%). According to the district's Strategic Plan, over half of the teachers in the district have taught there for over 13 years, yielding the question, why do they stay?

Selection of Participants

Given the qualitative design, purposeful sampling was employed. Purposeful sampling is a process in which participants are selected based on specific criteria, enabling the researcher to understand a specific problem (Chinn, 2007). The researcher gathered data from four elementary classroom teachers (kindergarten through sixth grade), each with at least 10 years of teaching experience, who have spent their entire careers in their current school. The rationale for selecting teachers with at least 10 years of experience is that these teachers have surpassed the five-year mark where teachers tend to leave the profession. Attempts were made to select participants for this study that were both male and female, varying in age, race, and ethnicity. In defining current position, the researcher selected elementary teachers who maintained their positions as an elementary teacher within Steele Community Schools and have maintained their position as an elementary school teacher throughout their career. Attempts were made to ensure that teachers have been employed in the same building within the district. However, participants were considered if they had been employed in any of the two elementary buildings in the district, as the demographics of the population of students served are similar. Once participants were selected, a table with pseudonyms, race, gender, years of experience, etc. was created.

Ethical Consideration and Confidentiality

To ensure a relationship of trust between and among the researcher, district, and teachers, each participant, principal, and superintendent of Steele Community Schools was assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Additionally, said members were informed of the purpose of the study, the design, and presented with the written researcher/district agreement prior to conducting individual interviews. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Purdue University Institutional Review Board.

Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant was reminded that participation in the study was strictly voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point if they deemed it necessary. Participants were also assured that identifiable information would not be recorded in the study and pseudonyms would be used to link responses with participants. Prior to including findings in the final report, participants were informed of the emergent findings from the data. Participants were allowed to clarify any misinterpretations before finalization of the data. Lastly, the results and final report were offered to the participants if desired.

Gaining Access and Entry

Once the study was approved by the IRB at Purdue University, the researcher formally proposed the study to the superintendent of Steele Community Schools (Appendix B) in order to receive their approval to conduct the study in the district with select elementary teachers. The researcher worked with the superintendent and the superintendent's designee to distribute a formal invitation to elementary teachers in the district to participate in the study (Appendix C). The formal invitation, distributed by the superintendent's designee, contained a link that allowed interested staff to sign up for the study anonymously. Upon collection of the names of interested teachers, the researcher contacted the teachers via email, asking them to complete an initial

demographic survey and offering a more detailed description of the purpose of the study, process, time commitment of the participants, and researcher contact information. An additional correspondence between researcher and participant occurred to schedule a date and time for the interview, as well as provide the participant with the WebEx link for the virtual interview.

Data Collection Procedures

This study focused on four elementary teachers who have been in their current positions for 10 or more years and what they have experienced during their tenure that has influenced them to stay in their position. Participants in this study engaged in a one-on-one, semi-structured interview that lasted up to one hour. Semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate choice for this study because a semi-structured interview focuses on finding the why of a phenomenon and reflecting on the lived human experience. Semi-structured interviews offered more flexibility in questioning. "

> By changing the questions and the areas discussed during the interview we can address aspects that are important to the individual participants, and by doing so we can gain a better understanding of the research question… you can use semi-structured interviews to explore more complicated research questions (Fylan, 2005, p. 66).

The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and factors that have kept the participants teaching in high-poverty schools and what can be done to support and keep highly qualified teachers henceforth. The versatility of semi-structured interviews allowed for a much deeper understanding of the factors that have increased the desire to stay. When somewhat sensitive information was given, or if the information was contradictory, the researcher was able to explore further and gain clarification.

Use of phenomenology in this study required the researcher to bracket, as the participants and researcher have shared background familiarity and experiences in the field. Bracketing required the researcher to remove views, beliefs, feelings, and preconceived notions regarding the subject matter (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). The research method presented itself as the appropriate approach, in that it aligns with the purpose of a phenomenological study. Through this study, the researcher sought to determine significant statements, themes, and the fundamental structure of the experiences teachers share regarding their decisions to stay in the education field.

Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with study participants currently employed in Steele Community Schools, a high-poverty school district in Michigan, during the spring semester of the 2020–2021 school year. Interviews were conducted through the WebEx video conferencing platform due to restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Video conferencing offered participants the flexibility of location and the comfort of a neutral, non-threatening setting. Participants made themselves available for a session lasting one hour or less to participate in the semi-structured interview. Participants were provided a copy of the interview questions to briefly review prior to the start of the interview (Appendix A). The semi-structured interviews were recorded, both audio and video, through the WebEx platform, with the given consent of the participants. Recordings of the interviews remained confidential and remained in the researcher's personal possession on Purdue Box, a secure cloud storage requiring dual-authorization and Purdue University credentials for access. Upon completion of the virtual, semi-structured interviews, transcriptions were created and stored on Purdue Box. Additionally, the researcher made notations of key phrasing that was deemed useful in the data analysis and

potentially connected across all participants. All interviews ended with a quick debriefing session lasting up to two to three minutes, to briefly summarize the discussion and to serve as an initial member check to ensure the researcher's understanding and comprehension of the information the participants verbalized. Participants agreed to make themselves available for follow-up phone conversations, in case any points needed clarifying once the researcher began working through the information from the interviews. Transcripts of the interviews were reviewed after transcription by both the researcher and the participant to ensure validity and accuracy in their responses. Using Herzberg's two-factor theory as a framework, interviews were reviewed for common themes and responses were charted by relevance. The research method presents itself as an appropriate method that aligns with the purpose of a phenomenological study. To conclude, in this study the researcher determined significant statements, themes, and the fundamental structure of the experiences teachers share regarding their decisions to stay in the education field.

Data Analysis Procedures

The rationale for choosing a phenomenological study was to gain a deep, rich understanding of the participants' views on why they have decided to stay in the education profession. According to Johnson and Christensen (2016), this requires participants to reflect on previous experiences they have had throughout their career. Data collected were specific to the participant, not generalized. Upon completion of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher dissected the data to discover the essence or properties of the participants' experiences that have led them to stay in the education profession, allowing the researcher to look for themes that were derived from each participant. The researcher then looked for common themes amongst all participants to describe any common structure of the experience for the entirety. Member

checking, or the process that allows participants to review, comment, and approve data interpretations, took place throughout the data analysis process to increase the trustworthiness of the research (Iivari, 2018). Additionally, to ensure validity, the researcher will "have the original participants review the interpretations and descriptions of the experience, especially the statement of the fundamental structure of the experience" (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 448).

Data Management

Due to the copious amounts and possibly wide range of data of be collected, an efficient method of managing, storing, and retrieving the data were necessary. Interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then reviewed the transcriptions with the recorded interviews to ensure accuracy and that the transcriptions were free from error. Tables were created for each interview question. The researcher color-coded each of Herzberg's hygiene and motivational factors and applied this coding to all interview notes. Additional color-coding was used for factors that did not fall into or align with Herzberg's factors. Responses were then charted as factors that influence teachers to stay and factors that influence teachers to leave for easier visualization and to analyze factors that have the greatest impact on teacher retention. All data were kept confidential, in the researcher's personal possession, on Purdue Box.

Coding and Analysis

Through an inductive analysis of the data, the researcher was able to move specific, raw data to abstract concepts, documenting common patterns, categories, or themes in a bottom-up approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Patton, 2002). To begin identifying unique characteristics of the data for future interpretation, coding practices were applied to the data (Merriam, 1998).

There are three different types of coding that can be used either sequentially or as independent methods: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

Open coding. The process of open coding requires the researcher to break apart the data into discrete units to discover and name phenomena in terms of their dimensions and properties – keeping open to all possibilities (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Throughout this process, the researcher will divide data, based on participants' actual words, into meaningful categories. Line-by-line analysis of the transcriptions, as well as field notes, will allow for the discovery of similarities and differences in each interview. Through the line-by-line analysis, the researcher will be able to categorize and color-code specific words or phrases for each participant to develop common themes or concepts. Constant comparison and refining of categories may be necessary as similar concepts begin to overlap.

Axial Coding. The process of axial coding allows the researcher to review categories and determine if and how they relate to subcategories – or relating concepts to each other. Through axial coding, the researcher will determine how a phenomenon manifests or conditions that bring about the phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Key concepts developed during open coding will be brought back together to determine if relationships or commonalities exist. Features of Microsoft Word will allow the researcher to freely merge common themes.

Selective coding. During selective coding, the researcher looks to integrate and refine categories to form a theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). The researcher will review categories and determine if meaningful relationships are present. The researcher will look for centralized themes that relate to influential factors related to retention practices previous research has proven to be effective, as well as new and applicable factors.

Addressing Quality

Trustworthiness. In a phenomenological study, the interviewer acts as the measurement tool. Results are gathered differently than they would be in a quantitative study. There is not an experimental tool involved, nor are the results collected intended to be generalized. Data collected are based on the researcher's understanding and interpretation of interview data collected and must be clear of opinion and bias. Additionally,

> analytic credibility depends on the coherence of the argument: Readers will judge the trustworthiness of the process by how the analyst uses evidence from the interviews to support the main points and whether the building tasks of language converge toward a convincing explanation" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1376).

As previously stated, member checking will allow for consistency and eliminate any bias. The researcher will "have the original participants review the interpretations and descriptions of the experience, especially the statement of the fundamental structure (theme) of the experience" (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 448).

Limitations. For this study, consideration of the limitations of a phenomenological study and those of qualitative research must be considered. According to Johnson and Christensen (2016), understanding that results from a phenomenological study are unique to the population of the study and should not be generalized for a larger population is a limitation of the design. Additionally, while attempts to remove researcher bias through bracketing and other measures should be made, bias can still be a limitation of the study. Lastly, with the focus of a phenomenological study being on individual's lived experiences, and given that communication between researcher and participant is unique, it becomes impossible to replicate results. With considerations of these limitations, the desire to gain a deep, rich understanding of participant experiences within the phenomenon of what is being done and what has been done correctly to retain them in their positions, a phenomenological investigation satisfies this objective.

Summary

Chapter three outlined the methodology and framework, procedures of data collection, sample selections, and data collection and analysis techniques. Through the phenomenology framework and semi-structured interviews, the experiences of four elementary teachers in high-poverty schools were reviewed to determine common themes as to why the participants decided to stay in their current positions for over 10 years. Participants were selected based on specific criteria set forth for the study. Coding was used to analyze the data collected.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study focused on the lived experiences of four elementary school teachers with 10 or more years of experience in a high-poverty school to identify factors that have led them to remain in their positions. By collecting data from veteran teachers who have remained in a high-poverty school, there was opportunity for greater exploration into key motivational factors that define the phenomenon of teacher retention. During an interview session with each teacher, each reflected on their lived experiences that contributed to their longevity in their positions. Themes emerged from the data collected during the interviews. These themes were initially analyzed through Herzberg's two-factor theory, which proposes that job satisfaction is highly influenced by hygiene and motivation factors, indicating hygiene factors may cause dissatisfaction in a job, but it is motivation factors that create job satisfaction. Chapter 4 reviews Herzberg's two-factor theory, participant demographics, interview data and the themes that emerged in relation to Herzberg's two-factor theory, as well as assertions identified as most relevant to these veteran teachers remaining in their teaching positions at a high-poverty school.

Review of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

To examine the influential factors that lead to teacher retention and why teachers choose to stay in high-poverty schools, Herzberg's two-factor theory served as the theoretical framework that grounded this study. Herzberg proposes that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction created in employees is highly influenced by two factors: hygiene factors and motivation factors (see Figure 1). This model was used as a rubric during the analysis of teachers' perceptions of past and current experiences in the position, as this framework may have influenced teachers' decisions to stay in the profession.

To review, Herzberg theorized that hygiene factors, such as working conditions, quality supervision, and salaries, do not, by themselves, increase employee satisfaction but could potentially cause employees to become dissatisfied in their position and leave if they are inadequate or not present in the working environment. Motivation factors such as achievement, the work itself, and recognition will motivate employees to perform at a higher level and give employees great satisfaction in their job (Herzberg, 1966). Herzberg suggested the job factors that satisfy workers and those that dissatisfy workers were not on a conceptual continuum and were mutually exclusive (Herzberg, 1966). He theorized the presence of two continua, each measured from low to high: job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. These continua act independently where eliminating job dissatisfaction will not influence job satisfaction and vice versa (Bressler, 2012). Given the constructs provided by Herzberg, commitment to an individual's job is heavily influenced and correlated to job satisfaction rates. As the job satisfaction rates increase, the level of commitment also rises (see Figure 2).

Data Collection

This study focused on four elementary teachers who have been in their current positions for 10 or more years and what they have experienced during their tenure that has influenced them to stay in their position. Participants in this study engaged in a one-on-one, semi-structured interview that lasted up to one hour.

Transcriptions of interviews were reviewed after transcription and participants received their transcript for review to ensure validity and accuracy in their responses. Using Herzberg's two-factor theory as the theoretical framework that grounded the study, interviews were reviewed for common themes and responses were charted by relevance. The research method presents itself as an appropriate method that aligns with the purpose of a phenomenological

study. To conclude, in this study the researcher determined significant statements, themes, and the fundamental structure of the experiences teachers share regarding their decisions to stay in the education field.

Participants and Demographic Information

Four white, female elementary teachers at Steele Community Schools participated in this study, ranging from 10 to 31 years in their current teaching position (Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age Range	Current Grade level	Years of Teaching Experience	Years in the District
Jenny	Female	White	50-54	6th	17 years	10 years
Donna	Female	White	50-54	3rd	23 years	23 years
Marie	Female	White	45-49	4th	25 years	23 years
Angela	Female	White	60-64	Kindergarten	34 years	31 years

Analysis of Interview Data

Why Education? Participants' Career Choice

Understanding each participant's initial reasoning for getting into the field of education was relevant for comparison to their current desire to remain in the field and how factors may support or enhance these reasons throughout their career.

Teachers participating in this study indicated their decision to enter the field of education was influenced by family. Jenny indicated she has family members who are teachers and she had always had a passion for working with children. Donna got into education because she always loved working with children, participated in cadet teaching in high school, and stated that the thought of being in a profession where she could make an impact in the lives of children is what

really drew her to the field of education. Marie's greatest influence to get into teaching was her family history of teaching. She has a mother and several aunts who were educators. She noted that teaching was just what you did in her family, and that she did not see herself in any other profession growing up. Angela noted that there are generations of educators in her family and that teaching is what she was put on this earth to do. The heavy influence of family highlighted by participants supports a notion that participants got into education because it was almost an expectation or a "way of life."

Choosing Steele Community Schools

All four participants live outside the district boundaries of Steele Community Schools. Prior to coming to Steele Community Schools, Jenny taught in a neighboring district. She stated that her initial draw to Steele Community Schools was the reputation that it had amongst other educators for being a great, supportive district to work in. By contrast, Donna didn't know much about the school when she was offered and accepted her position. Marie had a definite intention behind her decision to teach at Steele, sharing it had always been her goal to return to teach in the school she grew up in. Like Donna, Angela didn't know much about Steele prior to being offered a teaching position there.

Analysis of Data

Data Management

Due to the copious amounts and wide range of data collected an efficient method of managing, storing, and retrieving of the data were used. Interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions with the recorded interviews to ensure accuracy and that the transcriptions were free from error. Tables were created for each interview

question. The researcher color-coded each of Herzberg's hygiene and motivational factors and applied this coding to all interview notes. Additional color-coding was used for elements that did not fall into or align with Herzberg's factors. Responses were then charted as factors that influenced teachers to stay and factors that influenced teachers to leave for easier visualization and analysis of factors that have the greatest impact on teacher retention. All data were kept confidential, in the researcher's personal possession, on Purdue Box.

Coding and Analysis

Through an inductive analysis of the data, the researcher moved specific, raw data to abstract concepts, documenting common patterns, categories, or themes in a bottom-up approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Patton, 2002). To begin identifying unique characteristic of the data for future interpretation, coding practices were applied (Merriam, 1998). In line with Strauss and Corbin's (2008) discussion of the coding process, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were used to create tentative labels for chunks of data, create relationships amongst the codes relevant to impactful factors as identified by Herzberg, and develop an overarching theme from the data.

Open coding. The process of open coding required the researcher to break apart the data into discrete units to discover and name phenomena in terms of their dimensions and properties – keeping open to all possibilities (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Throughout this process the researcher divided data, based on participants' actual words, into meaningful categories that were in line with Herzberg's factors. Line-by-line analysis of the transcriptions, as well as field notes, allowed for the discovery of similarities and differences in each interview. Through the line-by-line analysis, the researcher was able to categorize and color-code specific words or phrases for each participant to develop common themes and concepts. Constant comparison and refining of

categories was necessary as similar concepts began to overlap. For example, based on the "family atmosphere" feeling that was highlighted in the data, several positive comments related to administration referred to a relationship where administrators were perceived to be coworkers as much as they were supervisors. This blurred the line between supervisor quality and coworker relations, requiring several comparisons and refinements for accurate categorization.

Axial Coding. The process of axial coding allowed the researcher to review categories and determine if and how they relate to subcategories – or to relate concepts to each other. Through axial coding, the researcher determined how a phenomenon manifests or conditions that bring about the phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Key concepts developed during open coding were brought back together to determine if relationships or commonalities exist. Using Herzberg's framework as a guide, themes that were identified through open coding, such as mentorship and collaboration, were reviewed, compared, and then coded into a more overarching factor of coworker relations. This process allowed the researcher to begin to look at the most impactful factors to identify a phenomenon that impacted a teacher's decision to remain in their teaching position in a high-poverty school in Steele Community Schools.

Selective coding. During selective coding, the researcher looked to integrate and refine categories to form a theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). The researcher reviewed categories/factors and determined if meaningful relationships were present. The researcher looked for centralized themes related to retention practices previous research has identified to be effective, remaining open to new categories the data might reveal. While much of the interview data coded aligned within Hertzberg's factors, some data fell into new elements, such as local community and family. Through the analysis of the data and categories, the central categorical

theme related to all the influential factors influencing teacher retention at Steele Community

Schools was identified as "a sense of belonging."

During the review of data gathered from semi-structured interviews, attention was given

to coding the data into factors that are grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory. Specific

comments from the participants were categorized into one of Herzberg's hygiene or motivation

factors. Any comments that did not fall into one these factors but were relevant to the research

questions were categorized as new elements. Comments were also examined and sorted as

indicating satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The researcher also paid extra attention to how often

each factor was mentioned as both having a positive impact and negative impact. Doing so

allowed the researcher to compare how often each factor was referred to and, in turn, allowed the

researcher to discover which factors have had the greatest impact on the participants.

Hygiene Factors

Hygiene factors, or extrinsic factors, impact the levels of dissatisfaction one feels within

their job. These factors include administration, coworker relations, policies/rules, work

conditions, and salary (Herzberg, 2003). Hygiene factors are dependent on the conditional

workings around the job itself that indirectly affect the job. During the semi-structured

interviews, participants referred to working conditions, coworker relations, supervisor quality,

and salary/benefits as factors that increased satisfaction or lowered the levels of dissatisfaction

within their positions. Policies and rules were not mentioned as having a positive impact on the

participants' decision to remain in their current position.

Working Conditions

Working conditions, as defined by Herzberg (1966), are the basic surroundings in an organization that develops the physical and psychological comfort of an employee. Two participants referred to the positive influence that working conditions have had on their decision to remain in their teaching position in a high-poverty school. Marie stated,

I feel safe at my school

Angela also referred to her work conditions by stating,

I feel comfortable in my building.

We have a stable environment that we work in. It's a culture of staying around. They're (teachers) not just coming and going.

Donna and Jenny only referenced working conditions as creating dissatisfaction in their teaching positions, both referencing an increase in student disrespect and behaviors as creating a more difficult environment to teach in.

Participants made reference not only to their comfort in the physical environment of their work place, but also referred to psychological comfort within their buildings as well, all of which are encompassed under working conditions in Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Coworker Relations

Coworker relations, as defined by Herzberg (1966), are the relationships one has with their coworkers. Herzberg continues by defining relationships as interactions between an employee and another individual of equal stature within the organization. All participants noted that relationships were a huge factor throughout their careers, impacting their decision to stay in their high-poverty school. Coworker relations were positively referenced 21 times in the interview data. All participants noted there is "a family feel" within the district. Everyone is

close and there are deep-rooted relationships. People stay around because they owe it to each other and the students. Additionally, participants also noted a sense of trust amongst peers and trust from administration that positively impacts the relationships amongst staff. Having a great mentor helped ease the stress of being a new teacher. The relationship and support that was given was instrumental in surviving the first five years.

Marie highlighted these connotations several times though interviews:

> I had really good, a really good, mentor teacher. She was just spectacular. She and I became very good friends… I felt at home, and I felt that a lot of my first years, and throughout my career. I think of all the people that are there are very supportive, and it didn't feel that there was the pressure with all that support.

She continued later by stating:

> I love my team. I love my administration. It's such a positive experience for me all around. They're (colleagues) my heart. It's a family; that's how I see it. We all work together, and we all have one mission; to do what's best for our kids. I think our district has a lot of faults, but we (colleagues) are all the kind of people that want to make things better because we care about it, and each other.

Marie also made note of her mentor:

> She was extremely supportive and knowledgeable. I would always discuss things like planning, behaviors, and pedagogy with her and she always offered the best support and advice. She helped me survive.

Donna echoed the sentiment by stating:

> I feel like we're friendly. I work with friendly people. We all have the same mindset and are in it together for the kids.

Donna also reflected on her relationship with her mentor:

> I got observed my second year and I left that (post) observation discussion and went to my mentor teacher's room and cried. I remember talking with my mentor and she was like, 'what we can work on? What can we improve?' It really spoke to me and made me feel supported, valued, and a part of the team. She really was the one that helped me pick up my feet and figure out where do I where do I go from here.

Angela mentioned specifics such as:

> We are close knit. We work well together. I have a personal relationship with our superintendent. There are these deep-rooted relationships that I think help me, and my colleagues, succeed.

> Every teacher in our district is very important and we don't look at anyone any differently, no matter what they teach. Everyone is just as important just as valuable.

Angela made a brief mention to the support of a mentor during the interviews:

> Your mentor would definitely help you for the first three years you have a mentor. Mine really helped me and kept me in the district.

Jenny also emphasized coworker relations by stating:

> The people that I work with really drive me. I don't want to let them down. I want to be there for them. We all look out for each other and have each other's best interests in mind. I couldn't imagine working with and for a different group of individuals. We all have the same goal in mind and support each other to achieve that goal.

Jenny also stated:

> We create an environment where you are welcomed. You just feel like you belong, and you are part of the family.

Finally, Jenny acknowledged the power of a mentor:

> My mentor was absolutely amazing. They helped me out immensely in my first few years. They were a great resource and support.

The interview data on coworker relations was a largely coded factor with significant positive statements, suggesting the impact of coworker relations at Steele Community Schools matters. Participants in this study continually referred to the impact that their coworkers have had on their decision to stay in their current position in Steele Community Schools. Herzberg (1966) cites coworker relations as a hygiene factor that can increase or decrease dissatisfaction in the workplace. However, the data from this study support coworker relations as a motivating factor for teacher retention.

Policies and Rules

Herzberg (1966) defines "policies and rules" as set organizational standards developed to meet and accomplish tasks. While policies and rules will not increase employee satisfaction, unfair policies or ones that are not applied equally will increase job dissatisfaction (Syptak et. al., 1999). To that note, participants referenced policies and rules five times throughout all interviews, with all comments expressing dissatisfaction. Jenny expressed her discontent with policies and rules set in place by stating,

> The state really hasn't done the field of education many favors. All of the new mandates make people not want to be teachers or veteran teachers want to retire or leave.

Marie echoed this sentiment by stating,

> We started hiring newer teachers who only know competitive, test-driven mindset (because of mandates). We weren't collaborative so much anymore. It was just cutthroat.

Donna also supported this frustration by stating,

> We are required to collect too much data. There's too much testing; it's just too stressful. When do I teach? There is just so much red tape that we (teachers) feel like we have to go through just to appease the higher ups just to do our jobs.

While having clear policies and procedures in place sets the expectations for task completion, Herzberg notes that policies that are deemed unfair will lead to job dissatisfaction. Participants in this study noted that the addition of policies and increased mandates have increased their dissatisfaction in their current positions in Steele Community Schools, thus supporting Herzberg's (1966) theory.

Supervisor Quality

Herzberg (1966) notes that an employee's relationship with administration has an impact on job satisfaction. The more positive the relationship that administration has with employees,

the higher the job satisfaction. Two participants in this study noted supervisor quality as having a positive impact on job satisfaction. One participant was indifferent, citing both positives and negatives, while another participant only referenced negatives that have caused dissatisfaction. Marie referenced her supervisor by stating,

> I love my administration. They create a positive experience for me all around.

Angela also mentioned the support of her supervisors,

> I have a very supportive principal, assistant principal. My principal never pushed me to make a change until I was ready, and they offered support when I was making changes in my classroom.

> My district has listened to what I have said and have supported me.

Donna, on the other hand, was more on the fence as to the impact her supervisors have made on her, noting both positives and negatives.

> I remember she [principal] had a lot of negative things to say about my teaching (during an observation). I feel this helped me to really look at myself and my teaching. I feel I took everything she said and said "okay I'm going to work on it and be the right teacher I need to be."

> They're (administrator) great and all, but I do not feel supported when it comes to discipline.

Jenny's supervisors have led to some of her dissatisfaction in her position.

> I had a principal who would observe but would offer no feedback for growth. I knew I had areas for growth, but they never gave me suggestions.

She also noted,

> I do not agree with the way discipline is handled by administration.

Participants' mixed reviews on the impact of supervisor quality in their current position support Herzberg's theory that the more positive the relationship that administration has with employees, the higher the job satisfaction. To that note, the instances highlighted in this study that cite a poor view of administration quality help to support Herzberg's theory regarding

hygiene factors impact and job dissatisfaction, as participants acknowledged an increase in job dissatisfaction, yet they have remained in their teaching positions.

Salary/Benefits

Salary is the amount of money paid and additional benefits associated in the compensation given to an employee for their work (Herzberg, 1966). Three of the four participants made multiple references, four in total, to pay, time off, and additional perks of the job as a reason they choose to stay.

Jenny supported this theme by stating:

> Our salaries and benefits are not too bad. We get compensated pretty well for the time off we get.

Marie echoed the notion that salary and benefits are one reason she has chosen to stay:

> I mean financially we've never taken a cut (in pay). As far as salary we're pretty competitive [to] surrounding salaries. The district is competitive and offers similar benefits and pay, or better in some cases.

Donna reinforced the other participants' views by stating:

> I've always felt for what I got paid it wasn't really too bad. We have summers off. That's a bonus, that's beautiful.

Donna did, however, allude to being bound to her position due to her salary by stating,

> I'm at the top of the pay scale, so especially now, there is no way I could leave.

Herzberg (1966) concluded that hygiene factors have a direct impact on dissatisfaction in the workplace. The greater the presence and quality of the hygiene factor, the less job dissatisfaction occurs. Motivation factors, on the other hand, greatly impact job satisfaction. The greater the quality and presence of motivation factors, the more satisfied that employees are in the workplace.

Motivation Factors

Herzberg (2003) notes motivation factors are intrinsic factors and, by their very nature, tend to have longer-term effect on employees' satisfaction in their current positions. Motivation results from recognition, achievement, advancement, personal growth, and the work itself (Herzberg, 2003). Participants openly discussed recognition, work itself, advancement, and personal growth as factors that are present in Steele Community Schools and have increased their satisfaction with their current position. Achievement was not mentioned by any of the study's participants.

Achievement

Achievement, as defined by Herzberg (1966), is an individual's ability to meet set goals or objectives of an organization or individual. Theoretically, individuals want to achieve goals and be successful within their position. None of the participants of this study made reference to achievement as a satisfier or dissatisfier during this study.

Recognition

Herzberg (1966) identifies recognition as the acknowledgement of employees for successful completion of tasks or additional evidences of a job well done. One participant in this study referenced recognition as a satisfier that increased motivation in their job. Angela noted,

> I am a trustworthy face in our building.

Adversely, one participant, Jenny, cited recognition, or lack thereof, as a dissatisfier.

> In my previous district we were recognized during staff meetings for accomplishments. We don't do that much in this district, I kind of miss that.

Though recognition was not mentioned frequently, comments were made that support Herzberg's belief that recognition in a position, and/or lack thereof, impacts an employee's

satisfaction in their position. Acknowledging an employee for a job well done can increase

motivation and overall job satisfaction and may contribute to teacher retention.

Work Itself

The work itself category can be defined as any activity or task required to successfully

finish a job (Herzberg, 1966). When employees believe they have an important job coupled with

a sense of self-direction, they are more likely to have an increase in motivation and job

satisfaction (MasterClass, 2020). During conversations, several codes arose that developed the

theme of the work itself. Throughout the interviews, topics such as creativity, developing the

future, passion, and stewardship continued to rise to the surface. Three of the four participants

made multiple references, eight in total, that referenced the work itself as increasing their

satisfaction.

Donna stated:

> Teachers being valued in the community, because we're (Steele Community
> Schools) small you have a really great opportunity to make a big difference I
> think that's part of it.

She also noted,

> Doing what I love and making an impact on my students is a part of the job I love.

Marie made multiple references to the work itself as well. She mentioned:

> Just being an agent of change is amazing.
>
> There is this sense of responsibility (as an educator) that you don't get in other
> professions; there's a word for it… stewardship?
>
> I attended the school where I teach and it was kind of my goal to come back and
> teach at the district, to kind of serve the community and pay it forward.

Angela also mentioned:

> The concept of teaching is amazing, being a part of a young person's life, helping
> them develop, making a positive impact on their future.

In line with Herzberg's theory, participants supported the concept that the work itself can act as a motivator toward job satisfaction. Participants noted how important a profession they believe being an educator is and the impact that has on their motivation to remain in their positions.

Advancement

Advancement is considered the potential for growth and development within an organization and the probability of advancement over time (Herzberg, 1966). Increased opportunities, the ability to participate in extended professional development, and increasing skill sets and knowledge increases an employee's commitment to the organization and job satisfaction (Fareed & Jan, 2016). All four participants in this study referred to advancement as a satisfier in Steele Community Schools. There were five positive references to advancement throughout this study. Angela referenced an opportunity that she had to advance her education in her current position.

> There was a grant to fund teachers to get a minor in science through a local university. I got a science minor endorsement and hours to renew my certificate.

Donna noted a few opportunities that she sees as opportunities for advancement as well.

> You could be a coach and assistant they like to hire a teacher to be the sports person.

> Teachers lead staff meetings. We have teachers on committees.

Jenny also supported these statements.

> There seem to always be opportunities for growth and advancement in the district if you want them. They (the district) really seem to take care of those (employees) who are taking care of the district.

Lastly, Marie referenced her experience with advancement within Steele Community Schools.

I have had so many opportunities to develop and advance myself in the leadership roles that I have been able to take in the district.

Opportunities for advancement in Steel Community Schools are available for teachers who want the opportunity. Participants noted the opportunities available for advancement in the district, if individuals want to take advantage of them, create an increase in job satisfaction.

Personal Growth

Herzberg (1966) identified "personal growth" as an individual's desire to progress and the steps they take towards making said progress. Ownership and growth within an individual's position increase motivation to do a job well, as this gives the employee a sense of power and ability to carry out a task (Syptak et. al., 1999). Personal growth was referenced by two of the participants in this study. Marie noted her appreciation for the personal growth opportunities that she had by referencing leadership roles and opportunities that she has taken advantage of for her own growth. Donna also referenced opportunities that were given for personal growth by her district with a literacy consultant, but noted that the timing of these growth opportunities as not being favorable amongst staff.

> We have to give up our planning periods on Tuesdays to meet with a literacy consultant. They are trying to help us, but when we leave those meetings, thinking 'I gave up my planning for that?'

Other Elements

Through the analysis of data, an element that did not fall into Herzberg's two-factor theory emerged. This element was categorized as "outside community."

Outside Community

All participants constantly referred back to the community as a element for staying in their position with Steele Community Schools, noting that there is a sense of support and trust from families. They also noted there is an overwhelming sense of community involvement, connection, relationships, trust, and respect between Steele Community Schools and the outside local community.

Angela made mention of working in Steele Community Schools:

> There's a real Community feel…I am a trustworthy face and connected with families and members of our community. I've talked with several of the parents and grandparents in the community and the are like 'oh yeah I've heard about you' or 'so and so told me about you and I want my child in your class' or 'oh yeah I remember you from a long time ago.' There's a trustworthiness and community belief and support in you that has always spoken to me.

Angela referenced teachers that she knows who grew up in the community, supported the district growing up, and now teach in the Steele Community Schools.

> There are quite a few teachers I work with that actually graduated from my district and that's not something you see in a lot of places. It's very admirable and motivating.

Jenny also stated:

> If you want a hometown feel this would be a great place for you. I have had kids of kids now. It's (Steele Community Schools) a district that they (teachers) tend to stay there because the community supports this District. They wear their colors, they have signs in their yards, you know the football stuff. And it's a very small, tight knit, community feel.

Additionally, she mentioned:

> The relationships that I have with families are great. You get to be that teacher that starts seeing generations in the classroom before long. I have students of students that I have had, and they want to be in my class because of the relationships that I have built over time.

Donna stated:

Teachers that graduated from the district: This is their place. There are several teachers where they've had a couple generations in the classroom by request. You just know everyone. You know the kids. You know the grandmas. You can say "I know your aunt" or "I had your cousin" and that's how it is, always. I would say it's close, a small-town feel.

Later in the interviews, Donna continued to refer to coworker relations:

There's a trustworthiness, not only from the district, but the families. That has always spoken to me.

Lastly, Marie touted the outside community as being an instrumental factor:

I'm still very good friends with a lot of students that I had those first years. They are in their early thirties now and I have their kids that are in my class. We don't have a town that's named after our school; we are our own community in itself so that's how we stand out from other schools in this area. We are what's happening in our area and that family, of us just being the community. We have a community within this end of town, where it's not the businesses that make the community, it's the people that make a community. We have such support of our small school; the people are what makes this the district I'm in. It's huge! You feel like a family. That's our community, it's our schools and I just love that. It's a good feeling and I know that's why it's one of the reasons I haven't changed.

Additionally Marie noted that she had attended school in Steele Community Schools and made it a point to teach in the district that she attended, to serve the community she grew up in.

I attended the school where I teach and it was kind of my goal to come back and teach at the district, to kind of serve the community and pay it forward.

Unlike with Herzberg's two-factor theory, where internal factors within business organizations were evaluated, participants in this study noted the outside community as an external element to the organization that impacted job satisfaction and increasing their likelihood to remain in their position. Reference to the outside community by all participants acknowledges that having the support of the community served is an element that highly impacts the participants' decision to remain in Steele Community Schools.

Summary of Interview Data

The focus of this study was to investigate and understand why teachers choose to stay in their high-poverty elementary schools and identify the factors having the greatest impact on their decision to stay. To answer these questions, the researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected based on specific criteria set forth for the study. Coding was used to analyze the data collected. Through an analysis of the collected interview data, several factors addressed in Herzberg's two-factor theory came to light as having impacted participants' decisions to remain in their teaching positions in Steele Community Schools. Factors such as coworker relations, salary and benefits, and the job itself were noted the most frequently as having a positive impact on participants' desire to remain in their current position. Other factors such as policies/rules, supervisor quality, achievement, and personal growth were either not mentioned by participants, or noted as creating dissatisfaction in their current position. Lastly, a new element, outside community, emerged from the data. Participants noted the support and involvement of the outside community as having one of the greatest impacts on their decision to remain in Steele Community Schools.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to focus on the lived experiences of four elementary school teachers with 10 or more years of experience in high-poverty schools and reflect on the factors that have led them to remain in their positions. By interviewing veteran teachers who have remained in a high-poverty school, there were opportunities for greater exploration into key motivational factors that define the phenomenon of teacher retention. These participants have surpassed the novice teacher period when teacher attrition is most likely to occur.

To add to the body of knowledge in the area of teacher retention, a phenomenological research method allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of why teacher retention occurs, "find[ing] what experiences different people have in common" (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 446). Through phenomenological inquiry, the researcher developed a better understanding of factors that impacted each participant's decision to stay in their current position and what Steele Community Schools is doing that increases the likelihood that teachers will remain teaching at their school.

This chapter will summarize the findings of the study in regard to the study's research questions. Additionally, this chapter will offer interpretation of the findings, a discussion, highlight possible implications of the findings, examine limitations of the study, and give recommendations for future study and practice

Discussion of the Findings

The researcher sought to identify why teachers choose to stay in their high-poverty elementary school and identify factors having the greatest impact on why they stay. Demographic data were collected to make an initial comparison of the participants' age, gender, race, years of experience, and years with Steele Community Schools. While there was not much diversity in participants' age, gender, or race, there was variation in the participants' years of experience and years with Steele Community Schools.

Through the coding and careful analysis of the collected interview data, several themes developed that contributed to answering the study's research questions.

Research Question 1

Why do teachers choose to stay in high-poverty elementary schools?

Research question 1 was designed to dive into the reasons that teachers currently teaching in a high-poverty elementary choose to stay in their position. Through the organic conversation that the semi-structured interview allowed, participants were able to recall and discuss the motives that have led them to the points in their career that they are currently in, and their reasoning for being in and staying in a high-poverty school. Through the careful analysis of the answer coding, the researcher categorized codes into Herzberg's hygiene and motivation factors. Additionally, codes that did not fall into one of Herzberg's factors were grouped into a developed additional theme in relation to why teachers choose to stay in high-poverty elementary schools.

All participants acknowledged that their families have had a major impact on their career choices and their choice of school district. Each participant came from a line of educators, which significantly influenced their decision to teach, as teaching was acknowledged as a "way of life"

and where participants felt they belonged. Once in the profession, participants noted that the job itself had impacted their decisions to stay in their current position. Topics such as creativity, developing the future, passion, and stewardship that persisted in the data were all combined to develop the theme of the job itself. The last emergent theme was salary and benefits. Three of the four participants made multiple references to pay, time off, and additional perks of the job as a factor that increased satisfaction in their current position and impacts their decision to stay.

Research Question 2

What factors have the greatest impact on teachers' decisions to stay?

Research question 2 was developed to take a deeper, more detailed look into factors that have the greatest impact on a teacher's decision to remain in a high-poverty elementary school. Participants were asked to recall memorable events, both good and bad, or instances where they could have potentially left their current position, or the field of education all together. In-depth discussions then developed around specific factors that had the greatest impact on the participants' decisions to remain in a high-poverty elementary school. While the initial research question took a bird's eye view of why teachers stay, this question took a deep look into specific factors that impact their decision to stay year in and year out. Through the analysis of the interviews, two factors/elements developed. Participants recalled memorable events, both good and bad, or instances where they could have potentially left their current position or the field of education altogether and what factors impacted their recommitment to the school.

The first factor that all participants noted centered on coworker relations. Every participant in the study referenced coworker relationships as being an impactful factor throughout their careers, strengthening their decision to stay in their high-poverty school. Participants cited specific situations where trust of colleagues and opportunities to collaborate all

built and strengthened coworker relations. Additionally, it was noted that mentorship led to strong collegial relationships being formed between mentor and mentee and the support the mentor gave was instrumental in participants surviving the first five years. A new element that was mentioned by all participants was community, more specifically the local community outside of the school setting. Comments highlighted that a sense of support and trust from families, an overwhelming sense of involvement, connection, and respect, contributed to the development of the outside community as a factor that has impacted all participants' desire to stay in their positions in Steele Community Schools.

Interpretation of the Findings

Given the constructs provided by Herzberg, commitment to an individual's job is heavily influenced by and correlated to job satisfaction rates. As the job satisfaction rates increase, the level of commitment also rises. Using this framework, the researcher found that only three of Herzberg's identified factors were noted as having any impact on increasing a teacher's decision to stay in the profession: coworker relations (hygiene), salary/benefits (hygiene), and the work itself (motivation). Other elements were discovered as having a greater impact on teacher retention: family influence and outside community.

Teachers choose to stay in high-poverty elementary schools

Regarding the first research question, this study determined that family influences, the work itself, and salary/benefits impact participants' choice to stay in a high-poverty elementary school. These were determined as being relevant factors based on the frequency that each was referenced by participants.

Family Influences

The first theme that emerged from the data was family influence. Overwhelmingly, all participants in the study were influenced to go into the field of education by some member of their immediate family. Through the semi-structured interviews, all participants reflected on and made note of memories of growing up around education and how it was almost an expectation to become an educator. One participant noted that "it was cool to be a teacher growing up." Growing up around educators instilled the values and rewards of education. Additionally, an understanding of all the complexities that come with being an educator would be learned first-hand and the shock of the first years of teaching may be lessened. Furthermore, coming from a family of educators offers an additional support system and reference outside of the school setting. While recruiting teachers who come from a family of educators is not the end all, be all solution to eliminating teacher turnover, it could potentially be a small piece of the puzzle in lessening the phenomenon when coupled with other factors.

Work itself

The work itself factor arose through combining comments that addressed creativity, developing the future, passion, and stewardship. When participants referenced having an opportunity to make an impact, being an agency of change, and shaping student's futures, a sense of pride in the job became apparent. Multiple participants noted the ability to be creative in their lessons, classroom, and delivery of instruction as having a high impact on their job satisfaction. In correlation with Herzberg's two-factory theory, participants noted that the concept of teaching or the "work itself" was a source of motivation that increased their satisfaction within the current position. Furthermore, comments by participants that reflected dissatisfaction with the work

itself, such as, "we are required to collect too much data," "There's too much testing," "It's just too stressful," exemplify a potential for a decrease in job satisfaction.

Salary/Benefits

Through researcher coding, the concept of salary/benefits as a factor developed through the identification of comments addressing pay, time off, and additional perks of the job. As the researcher interpreted the collected data, it emerged that participants did not necessarily refer to salary as frequently as they noted time off. Based on participant references to having summers and holidays off and being on the same schedule as their children, one would hypothesize that any changes to days off and traditional school breaks would create job dissatisfaction. In the same vein of time off, all participants made the correlation to salary and the time they work, with one participant noting that while salaries might be lower than other fields if salaries were extended out for a full year of work, they would be rather competitive (compared to other professions) in her opinion. While one participant made a potentially dissatisfied reference to salary/benefits, mentioning having to stay in her position because she was at the top of the pay scale, all other references were positive.

Factors having the greatest impact on teachers' decisions to stay

Regarding the second research question, this study found coworker relations, outside community, and mentorship had the greatest impact on teachers' decisions to stay in their positions in a high-poverty elementary school. Factors were determined as being relevant based on the frequency that each was referenced by participants.

Coworker Relations

Coworker relations was the most highly referenced factor impacting participants' decision to stay in their high-poverty school. Participants noted that relationships were one of the biggest factors throughout their careers. All participants noted that there is a "family feel" within the district. Everyone is close and there are deep-rooted relationships. People stay around because they owe it to each other and the students. There is a trust amongst all staff. Study participants also noted collaboration as strengthening the relations amongst staff members. Positive interpersonal relationships help develop teamwork and collaboration, which have been cited as having a positive impact on job satisfaction (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000). Participant comments such as "I felt at home and I felt that a lot of my first years, and throughout my career," "we (colleagues) are all the kind of people that want to make things better because we care about it, and each other," "we still have those deep connections and relationships that we felt over the years," and "The people that I work with really drive me" support the notion of coworker relations having a positive impact on job satisfaction. The relationships and collaborations with their mentors were also noted as being highly impactful within coworker relations. Participants referred to the value of mentorship by stating their mentors were "extremely supportive and knowledgeable," "mine (mentor) really helped me and kept me in the district," and "she helped me survive." Starting early in a teacher's career, a strong mentor will not only introduce a novice teacher to the field of education but also help build strong coworker relations. Having strong support structures in place contributes to the effectiveness of an induction and mentoring program and, in turn, strengthens the likelihood of retaining novice teachers (Assunção Flores, 2004; Devos, et al., 2012; Howe, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Furthermore, based on the emphasis of coworker relations in this study, one would hypothesize

that a negative change in coworker relations would support Herzberg's theory and show an increase in job dissatisfaction.

Outside community

The local community where Steele Community Schools resides was highly discussed amongst all participant interviews. Through the interview process, data regarding participants' geographic location was unintentionally collected. The data provided a valuable insight as to where participants resided in relationship to Steele Community Schools. An interesting finding emerged regarding demographics. None of the participants resided within the boundaries of the Steel Community Schools district; however, participants made references to how they felt welcomed by the community and that they "belong" in the Steel Community Schools community. It was noted by multiple participants that there is an overwhelming sense of involvement, connection, trust, and respect from the outside local community. Given how frequently references to the outside community were made, it became obvious that the outside community has had a positive impact on participants' decisions to remain in their teaching position in Steele Community Schools. Interestingly enough, outside community does not fall within any of Herzberg's motivation or hygiene factors, nor was there literature found that would support this notion. Further research beyond this study on the impact the outside community has on teacher satisfaction should be explored in more depth.

Motivation Factors

Motivation factors (satisfiers), as defined by Herzberg (2003), are intrinsic factors and, by their very nature, tend to have longer-term effect on employees' satisfaction in their current positions. As the theory suggests, motivation factors cause positive job attitudes or job content

leading to proper performance at the workplace. The "work itself" was noted as being the most significant and impactful motivation factor with participants in this study. While there was mention of other motivation factors – recognition, advancement, and personal growth – there was not a significant enough difference between satisfied and dissatisfied comments to deem these factors as impactful on the participants' decisions to remain in their positions. Though there was a lack of representation in motivational factors when determining factors that increase teacher retention, when referenced, the comments would support Herzberg's theory in that there was an expression of job satisfaction when present.

Hygiene Factors

Herzberg notes dissatisfaction is derived primarily from the absence of hygiene factors or extrinsic factors that include administration, coworker relations, policies/rules, work conditions, and salary (Herzberg, 2003). This study noted "salary and benefits" and "coworker relations" as being the most significant hygiene factors, lessening dissatisfaction in participants and impacting their decision to stay in their position. Furthermore, "coworker relations" was the most referenced factor noted in all participants' decisions to stay in their positions. While hygiene factors are noted by Herzberg as leading to dissatisfaction if not present in the workplace, the findings in this study, specifically in regards to "coworker relations," was such a significant satisfier that it appears to be a motivator. One could argue, based on the context of discussion around concept of "coworker relations," that this factor does create satisfaction and motivation within participants. The more support and collegiality that was present with the participants' positions, the greater the satisfaction. Discussions surrounding "coworker relations" noted relationships and support from coworker as being a key reason for remaining in the position. The teachers made several comments supporting relationships as being a driving component in their

decision to remain, noting satisfaction and motivation: "The people that I work with really drive me," "I don't want to let them (coworkers) down," "They (coworkers) trust my judgement and that I know what is best for my students," and "They (mentor) were a great resource and support."

Other Elements

After parsing though Herzberg's factors, there were codes that, once grouped, did not present themselves as either motivation or hygiene factors. Outside community presented as a relevant and impactful element that had influenced participants' decisions to remain in their positions in a high-poverty elementary school. While literature supports Herzberg's motivation and hygiene factors as having impact on job satisfaction and dissatisfactions, literature on the impact of the outside community is scarce. This study found strong support from the local community and their respect for teachers contributed to the teachers feeling more at home and more motivated to remain in their positions. When there is a home, school, and community partnership, there is a sense of trust and support amongst all stakeholders. Participants noted, "The people are what makes this the district I'm in," "they (teachers) tend to stay there because the community supports this district," and "it's a very small, tight-knit, community feel."

Overall conclusion

From the essence that grew from the factors highlighted above, a glaringly obvious theme of a "sense of belonging" emerged. The teachers in the study entered into the field of education because of a sense of belonging to the teaching profession that was encouraged in them within their own family. Participants in this study are willing, or have been willing, to look past increased mandates, less than ideal working conditions, and less than average recognition

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because Steele Community Schools has increased the participants' "sense of belonging." Having strong relationships with coworkers and the support of the outside community gives teachers a connection and sense of belonging to the position. Investing in teachers by providing strong mentorships offers support and connections to the district and profession, leading again to a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging improves health, happiness, and motivation, as well as allowing people to feel like they are not alone in everyday struggles and difficult times (Hall, 2014).

Implications of Findings

Research has shown that one of the most influential factors tied to increasing student achievement is having, and retaining, fully certified teachers to lead classroom instruction. The findings of this study could be used by district and building-level leaders who are experiencing high rates of teacher turnover. As leaders take a systematic inventory of the processes and procedures within their district, special attention could, and should, be paid to factors and elements that have been noted in this study as contributing to a teacher's sense of belonging within their school and district. This study noted that the most highly impactful factors contributing to the participants' desire to stay in their positions were coworker relations, salary/benefits, the job itself, and the outside community. Increasing a novice teacher's sense of belonging in the school district, through positive mentorships and collegial interactions and promoting involvement, partnerships, and support of the outside community could contribute to lessening teacher turnover.

Limitations of the study

Throughout this study, there were several limitations that the researcher faced. First, this study was limited to one small, urban school district in Michigan. The study did not include multiple school districts or school districts located in suburban, rural, and/or remote areas. This may impact the generalizability of the study to school districts in different regions. Additionally, the study findings may only apply to the community that the study was conducted in and not other urban districts, as there are variations in enrollment, demographics, and geographical setting. Also, the lack of diversity in the sample population impacts the generalizability of the study results. The voluntary sample lacked differences in gender, race, and age.

The research design and methodology that was used to collect, analyze, and present data presented limitations to this study as well. The study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological methodology in which semi-structured interviews were conducted. According to Anderson (2010), the presence of the researcher, though unavoidable, during the interview process potentially impacted the responses of the participants. Participant's responses could have been guarded, as they could have questioned the complete confidentiality and anonymity of their responses even though assurances were made prior to conducting the interviews. The quality of the data is dependent on the researcher removing bias through bracketing and other measures, so bias can still be a limitation of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic may have created potentially unknown limitations to this study. Safety precautions set forth by the CDC, Purdue University, and Steele Community Schools limited access to school buildings and eliminated the ability to conduct traditional in-person interviews. Conducting interviews virtually could have offered limitations such as issues with internet connectivity, environmental distractions, and limited ability to read body language throughout the interview.

Lastly, due to the pandemic, educators across the country were required to leave their comfort zone of in-person instruction and traverse through uncharted territory to deliver virtual instruction or a hybrid version. Steel Community Schools was not exempt. The added stress of learning these new instructional modes may have potentially limited the willingness of additional veteran teachers to volunteer to participate in the study, limiting potential diversity in the population.

Recommendations for Future Studies and Practice

This study focused on the lived experiences of four elementary teachers who teach in a high-poverty elementary school in Steel Community Schools. While the researcher was able to collect rich, authentic data through the semi-structured interviews, there are opportunities, given the limitations, for further research on this topic.

1. This study was limited to four teachers currently teaching in a high-poverty elementary school in Steele Community Schools. The researcher would recommend that future studies be conducted with a larger population size. Though there was consistency within the results, a larger population would contribute additional data to this study's findings.

2. Additional research on the topic may want to include a more diverse sample. This study was limited to a minimally diverse sample in age, gender, and race. Though the study sample was consistent with the overall district teaching population in relation to gender and race, future studies could benefit from diversity in the sample.

3. Future research could employ a mixed-method research design; initially surveying a larger population of teachers to determine factors that influence retention. Upon initial data collection, interviews could be conducted with a smaller population to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of specific factors.

4. Participants in this study represented one high-poverty school district population. Future work should also seek to include rural and suburban public and private schools, as well as looking at schools that are considered low-poverty.

5. Through the authentic conversations that semi-structured interviews allow, it was discovered in this study that all participants had a lifelong desire to be teachers. This means that they took a traditional route to becoming an educator. Future scholars should look to include teachers who took an alternative certification path to become an educator or went into education as a second career.

6. This study focused on the lived experiences of four elementary school teachers in a high-poverty school. To understand systematic factors that have a positive impact on teachers' decisions to remain in their positions, future work should look to include secondary teachers.

7. With the emergence of outside community being a common factor in teacher satisfaction at Steele Community Schools, future studies focusing on the relationship between the outside local community and teacher satisfaction is recommended.

Conclusion

One of the most influential factors tied to increasing student achievement is having, and retaining, fully certified teachers to lead classroom instruction. Persistent teacher turnover, regardless of teacher effectiveness, in high-poverty schools has a negative impact on student achievement, posing an astonishing challenge for sustained academic improvement in these schools (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ingersoll, 2001, 2004). Based on the findings of this qualitative study, school district leaders could potentially take a deeper look at factors that have been referenced as having had a positive impact on teachers' decisions to remain in their

positions in a high-poverty school. While this study found that family influences, the job itself, and salary/benefits had an impact on why teachers chose to stay in a high-poverty elementary school, coworker relations and the local community outside of the school setting had the greatest impact on teachers' decisions to stay.

While some would initially believe that increasing salary works as a motivator to reduce teacher turnover, this study confirmed Herzberg's (1966) findings that he did not consider salary/benefits as a motivational factor, but instead as a hygiene factor that decreases dissatisfaction in a position. School and district leaders should work to create or improve a teacher's sense of belonging in their district and community. Improving a district's culture/climate with emphasis on coworker relations and strengthening the school/community relations, along with providing a strong mentorship program, could potentially reduce teacher turnover within high-poverty schools. Though it was noted that the results of this study may not be generalizable, the results can still act as a starting point for internal audits of systems and practices currently in place within school districts.

APPENDIX A. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Tell me about yourself (family, hobbies, background, etc.) and how you ended up in your current position to allow me to get to know you as a person?

   Probe:

   Factors that influenced you to accept position

2. Let's dive into your first years of teaching. Talk to me about some memorable experiences, both good and bad, you feel define you as an educator.

   Probe:

   Did any of these make you consider leaving this position? Can you tell me about why you decided to continue your commitment?

3. Describe how you see the school/district. Tell me about things that impact you staying in your current position.

   Probe:

   a. *School administration*

   b. *School Climate*

   c. *Professional development/growth*

4. Tell me about challenges you (have) face(d) in your current position and how you overcome (overcame) these challenges.

5. Imagine you were asked to recruit me to teach in your district, reflecting on your time in your current position. What would be your recruitment pitch?

6. Talk to me about external factors (family, community, etc.) that have impacted your longevity in your current position.

7. Tell me some things about how/why you maintain longevity in your position here that I did not already prompt you to talk about. Is there anything I did not ask that you would like to add or share with me today?

APPENDIX B. SUPERINTENDENT PERMISSION EMAIL

Dear **(Superintendent Name):**

My name is Adam Burtsfield, and I am an educator in Michigan. I am also a doctoral candidate at Purdue University working with Dr. Alice Johnson in the College of Education. For my dissertation, I am researching factors that keep teachers working in high poverty schools coming back to their positions each year specifically at the elementary level. From what I have researched, elementary teachers in your district have shown longevity in their positions. The goal of the study is to interview four to six certified kindergarten through sixth grade teachers who have over ten years of experience and have taught in your district for their entire career. Results from this study may help building-level administrators identify job satisfaction factors that contribute to a teacher's decision to remain teaching in a high poverty setting, and guide strategies to help address the teacher shortage epidemic in Michigan, specifically in high poverty schools.

I am asking for your permission to interview four to six elementary teachers in your district. If permission is granted, I would ask for the names and email addresses of your current elementary teacher who have ten years of experience. I would send the identified teachers an email inviting them to participate in the study. Four teachers will be selected from interested potential participants and interviews will be scheduled. I will note that all interviews will take place via WebEx video conferencing to meet the COVID 19 safety protocols that have been set by Purdue University. Interviews will be semi-structured and last up to one hour. Teachers, as well as the district, will be assigned pseudonyms for complete anonymity of everyone involved. Interviews will be recorded and kept on a password protected drive and then destroyed immediately after my study is completed.

If you allow me to conduct my study in your district, please reply to this email. I will then work with you or whomever you direct me to gather names and emails of potential participants that meet my previously stated criteria.

I appreciate your time and assistance as I gather data to help retain excellent teachers for our children!

Should you have any questions about this research, please contact me at aburtsf@purdue.edu or Dr. Alice Johnson at alicejohnson@purdue.edu.

Respectfully,

Adam Burtsfield   Dr. Alice Johnson
Doctoral Candidate   Assistant Clinical Professor
Purdue University   Purdue University

APPENDIX C. EMAIL TO TEACHERS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

My name is Adam Burtsfield, and I am an educator in Michigan. I am also a doctoral candidate at Purdue University working with Dr. Alice Johnson in the College of Education. I am seeking your potential participation in my study that looks to identify factors that keep elementary teachers working in high poverty schools coming back to their positions each year. I will be interviewing four elementary teachers who have spent their career of ten or more years in their current district. Results from this study may help building-level administrators identify job satisfaction factors that contribute to a teacher's decision to remain teaching in a high poverty setting, and guide strategies to help address the teacher shortage epidemic in Michigan, specifically in high poverty schools.

In order to collect my data I will conduct a one hour, semi structured interview with four to six teachers selected from a pool of potential participants. I will note that all interviews will take place via WebEx video conferencing to meet the COVID 19 safety protocols that have been set by Purdue University. Participants, as well as the district, will be assigned pseudonyms for complete anonymity of everyone involved. Interviews will be recorded and kept on a password protected drive and then destroyed immediately after my study is completed.

If you would be willing to be a potential participant in my study please complete this short demographic and contact survey [demographic and contact survey](#) by April 23, 2021 and your name will be added to the pool of potential participants. Participants selected for the study will be notified by April 26, 2021. I will then work with participants to set up a time to conduct the interview, lasting up to one hour.

Should you have any questions about this research, please contact me at aburtsf@purdue.edu or Dr. Alice Johnson at alicejohnson@purdue.edu. I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Adam Burtsfield   Dr. Alice Johnson
Doctoral Candidate   Assistant Clinical Professor
Purdue University   Purdue University

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