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Charter School Principals Perceived Self-Efficacy Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act

Christina Renee Hamilton
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Christina R. Hamilton

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Charter School Principals' Perceived Self-Efficacy Implementing the Every Student

Succeeds Act

by

Christina R. Hamilton

MA, University of Redlands, 2009

BA, University of Redlands, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

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August 2020

Abstract

Charter school principals have existed in the U.S. public school system for more than 30 years, and the number has grown dramatically in Southern California over the past decade. Like other principals, charter school principals are responsible for implementing the provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). Yet, charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy are not well enough understood to determine their effective implementation of ESSA. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implemented the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California. The theoretical framework was based on Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. The research question was focused on understanding charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy and ESSA. Criterion sampling strategies were used to select 5 charter school principals from San Bernardino County in Southern California. Semi structured interviews and surveys were conducted and analyzed using first, second, and pattern coding. The resulting themes were efficacy for school management and ESSA, efficacy for instructional leadership, efficacy for moral leadership, and ESSA and COVID-19 leadership resilience. Participants had high perceptions of self-efficacy in implementing ESSA during the coronavirus pandemic. The positive social change implications of this study include providing knowledge that executive administrators can use to develop self-efficacy professional development/training for their charter school principals. With higher perceived self-efficacy, principals may be more effective in upholding federal mandates and ensuring that their schools remain open to students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Charles D. Hamilton, my mother, Mrs. Marie Guess, my siblings, nieces, nephews, my deceased father, Fred Guess Jr., and my deceased Aunt Ouida Bond-Mensah. My family has always been an inspiration to me. I come from a long line of public school teachers and Bible school teachers. They instilled in me a love for God and a love of education. Their prayers and words of encouragement gave me the strength and patience to finish this dissertation journey.

To my husband, thank you for your unconditional love, support, and patience during this journey. You are my pillar my of strength.

To my mother, you have always been a lady of beauty, intelligence, kindness, and love. Thank you for cooking and shopping for me every week. This allowed me to be a full-time charter school principal and a full-time doctoral student.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3: 5-6

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Public charter school principals in California are usually exempt from implementing state and federal sanctions, except for education codes and special education laws, within their schools (Reed & Rose, 2018). For the first time, charter school principals are being “subjected to all state, and federal accountability measures” like traditional public school principals with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; Reed & Rose, 2018, p. 358). Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, and Hough (2017) revealed that traditional school principals were stressed and overwhelmed with the accountability system implemented in California for ESSA. If traditional public school principals experienced stress and frustration with implementing the multiple accountability measures of ESSA, then researchers need to take a closer look at principal self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as a person’s belief in his or her ability to successfully execute behaviors required to accomplish tasks, goals, and situations. Reed and Rose (2018) defined principal self-efficacy as a school principal’s belief in one’s ability to successfully implement local, state, and federal laws in one’s respective school with effective instructional leadership and school management.

Given the importance of ESSA, researchers will need to study the self-efficacy of charter school principals to understand the practical and ineffective implementation of the federal sanction in charter schools. I conducted this study to address this gap in the research. In this chapter, I will present background information, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research question, and the theoretical framework associated with

self-efficacy. The nature of the study will be outlined, as well as critical definitions that will be used throughout the study. Additionally, the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the research for positive social change will be discussed.

Background

Public charter school principals must operate within the provisions of state and federal laws (Fuller, Pendola, & Hollingworth, 2017; Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, & Hough, 2017; Urick, Wilson, Ford, Frick, & Wronowski, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). ESSA requires U.S. public school principals, traditional and charter, to meet rigorous accountability measures (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). President Obama signed the federal mandate on December 10, 2015, to promote college and career readiness in K-12 students (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Public school principals are held accountable to the state, federal, and local government for ensuring that students receive instruction that adequately prepares them for higher education and careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Principals must provide annual updates to teachers, families, students, and communities on statewide assessments that measure students' progress on high academic standards and college and career readiness indicators (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In addition, public school principals must effect positive change in their schools by increasing graduation rates, lowering dropout rates, and reducing student absenteeism within one school year (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018, U.S. Department of Education, 2019). ESSA has resulted in higher levels of

transparency and accountability for public school principals (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018, U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Public charter school principals are a vital part of the public education system in California (California Charter Schools Association, 2019a; Klocko, Jankens, & Evans, 2018). Unlike traditional school principals, charter school principals must develop marketing plans to enroll students, find and lease buildings, recruit teachers, and keep their charters fiscally viable by developing and monitoring various budgets (Klocko et al., 2018). The role of a charter school principal is therefore vastly different from the role of a traditional public school principal. As such, charter school principals need high levels of principal self-efficacy to effectively operate their respective charter schools (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Possessing sufficient self-efficacy to effectively lead their schools may, however, be a challenge for charter school principals. Previous researchers have demonstrated that traditional school principals in California were unable to achieve performance accomplishments and maintain effective leadership practices when obstacles emerged from federal mandates due to their low levels of perceived self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018). The new accountability measures of ESSA could increase or reduce the perceived levels of self-efficacy in charter school principals; research on self-efficacy suggests that levels of self-efficacy derived from mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal will guide how principals effectively implement the accountability measures of ESSA in California (see Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al.,

2018). Further research is needed to determine the perceived levels of self-efficacy in public charter school principals in Southern California.

Problem Statement

Current research has established that charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy are not well enough understood to determine their effective implementation of ESSA in their respective charter schools (Fuller et al., 2017; Klocko et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018; Urick et al., 2018). ESSA holds public school principals, traditional and charter, accountable for multiple measures to determine school performance (Urick et al., 2018). The accountability measures for public school principals include implementing college and career readiness standards, implementing Common Core State Standards, retaining highly qualified teachers, increasing student graduation rates, and reducing student dropout rates (Urick et al., 2018, p. 417). Understanding public charter school principals' self-efficacy beliefs is vital because the successful implementation of the new federal sanction in California depends on all public school principals, traditional and charter (Fuller et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018).

The low retention rate of charter school principals in California might be related to ESSA. Marsh et al. (2017) noticed a high turnover rate in school principals from California after ESSA was implemented in public schools across the United States. School principals in California experienced high levels of stress due to the multiple accountability measures of ESSA (Marsh et al., 2017). Although researchers have conducted studies to investigate the stress levels and self-efficacy of traditional public school principals, there is a need for an in-depth understanding of public charter school

principals' beliefs of self-efficacy and how it strengthens or weakens their implementation of the ESSA in their respective charter schools (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018). Charter school principals are "unique in their approach to school operations and instruction," and they face challenge differently than traditional school principals do because of the "myriad of expectations inherent in the role of charter school leader" (Klocko et al., 2018, p. 83). Additional research is therefore needed on charter school principals' self-efficacy.

In 2019, there were more than 1,300 charter school principals in Southern California (California Department of Education, 2019). Limited research exists that specifically examines the implementation of ESSA on charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy in Southern California. The problem, therefore, is that current research has established that charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy are not well enough understood to determine their effective implementation of ESSA in their respective charter schools (Fuller et al., 2017; Klocko et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018; Urick et al., 2018). The research from this study will fill this gap in the literature by examining charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy as they implement the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implement the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California. The requirements of ESSA have exerted significant pressure on public school principals (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017). The self-

efficacy of charter school principals (i.e., performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states) can be affected negatively or positively based on their personal beliefs in their abilities to implement ESSA (Bandura, 1977). I used interviews and surveys to gather data to develop an understanding of the accountability measures of ESSA and their relationship to the perceived levels of self-efficacy in charter school principals from Southern California.

Research Question

The central research question in this study was, How do charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California?

Theoretical Framework

I based the theoretical framework for this study on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. Bandura argued that self-efficacy was derived from a person's "performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (p. 191). These factors determine whether a person will initiate coping behaviors when faced with negative experiences, challenges, or barriers (Bandura, 1977). I selected Bandura's theory to explain the personal efficacy of charter school principals (i.e., performance accomplishments and physiological states) in Southern California. The social cognitive theory of self-efficacy was the appropriate theoretical framework for this qualitative case study and fit the central research question as well as the research instruments (i.e., surveys and interviews). In Chapter 2, I will provide a more detailed explanation of how Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy relates to

charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy and their abilities to implement ESSA in their respective schools.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this research was a qualitative case study. The central topic for this qualitative study was the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California. The study phenomenon was the impact of ESSA on the self-efficacy of charter school principals. I conducted in-depth interviews and surveys with five charter school principals (all names will be pseudonyms) in San Bernardino County, Southern California. In alignment with the research question, data were collected and organized into categories based on charter school principals' perceptions of past and present performance in implementing federal mandates (i.e., No Child Left Behind, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and ESSA) and their perceptions of self-efficacy using the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The findings of this study add to research on charter school principals. The study provides data for executive directors of charter schools in Southern California who want to address the self-efficacy levels of their charter school principals. Given that the research was intended to describe the perceived levels of self-efficacy in charter school principals in Southern California, the bounded unit was charter school principals from the largest county in California, San Bernardino County (California Department of Education, 2019a). The case study design aligned with the purpose statement and research question, which centered on the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California who implemented ESSA in their charter schools. Thus, the qualitative case study method

was appropriate for this study. The research design and rationale will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following terms and their definitions are used in this study:

Accountability measures of the Every Student Succeeds Act: A mandate whereby U.S. public school principals must submit annual school data to the state that indicates an increase in student performance on standardized assessments, a deduction in chronic absenteeism, an increase in graduation rates, and a reduction in suspension rates (Reed & Rose, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In addition, public school principals must submit data that demonstrate that all students are being taught high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

California School Dashboard Report: An accountability system used by the California Department of Education to track the performance of all public schools in California (Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). Per ESSA, every public school in California is measured on chronic absenteeism, dropout rates, graduation rates, suspension rates, and academic performance on standardized assessments in mathematics and language art (Reed & Rose, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Charter school principal: A public school administrator hired by teachers, parents, community leaders, or a community-based organization to provide innovative instruction to public school students in elementary charters, middle school charters, or

high school charters (California Charter Schools Association, 2019a; Reed & Rose, 2018).

College and career indicator: An accountability system used by the California Department of Education to track how well public schools in California are preparing students to succeed in college and careers (Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). The measures include student completion of dual enrollment courses (college coursework with a grade C or better where college credit is awarded), University of California and California State University A-G requirements (students complete standard high school courses with a grade C or better), and career technical education pathway (students complete one of 16 career pathways with a grade C or better), and scores on advanced placement and international baccalaureate exams (Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018).

Coronavirus (COVID-19): A large family of viruses that causes mild and chronic upper respiratory infections in humans and some animals (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). It is spread by coughing, sneezing, having close personal contact, and touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (H.R. 478): A federal law signed by President Donald Trump on March 27, 2020 (California Department of Education, 2020). Congress allocated \$16.5 billion to go directly to local education agencies to help schools with their virtual offerings (technology devices and distance learning platforms) for K-12 students (California Department of Education, 2020).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The federal law signed by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). This educational law reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with an additional focus on dropout rates, graduation rates, suspension rates, and college enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act: The federal law signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 to improve the quality of primary and secondary education in school districts that served low-income students (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). It offered federal grants to school districts that needed textbooks, library books, and special education centers (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Perception: The viewpoint of an individual toward a cause, outcome, or a person (Saldaña, 2016).

Public school principal: A public school administrator of a traditional or charter public elementary school, middle school, or high school (California Department of Education, 2019).

School principal self-efficacy: A principal's belief in their ability to successfully implement local, state, and federal laws in their respective school (Reed & Rose, 2018).

Self-efficacy: Belief in one's ability to successfully execute behaviors required to accomplish tasks, goals, and situations (Bandura, 1977).

Traditional school principal: A public school administrator of a public elementary, middle school, or high school (California Department of Education, 2019b).

Assumptions

Assumptions are conditions in studies that are not fully within the control of the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The primary assumption in this study was that participants would answer questions regarding their implementations of ESSA to the best of their abilities (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018). Public school principals in California were familiar with ESSA because the California Department of Education required all public school principals to report their annual school data regarding this federal mandate to the California School Dashboard Report (Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). The next assumption was that the theoretical framework chosen for this study was appropriate for understanding the phenomenon regarding the self-efficacy of charter school principals. These two assumptions were necessary for this qualitative study because the intent was to understand ESSA and charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy as they implemented the federal mandate in their respective charter schools.

Scope and Delimitations

The research problem concerned the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California. The scope of this study only included elementary and secondary charter school principals within San Bernardino County, Southern California. To fully understand the self-efficacy of charter school principals in San Bernardino County, principals and administrators from traditional public schools and private schools within the county were excluded from the sample population. Delimitation of the study was that the population of charter school principals would be narrowed down by using criterion

sampling to select charter school principals from elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools within San Bernardino County in Southern California (California Department of Education, 2019a).

I addressed transferability in this study. I provided future researchers with detailed descriptions of the phenomenon and other context characteristics to “allow comparisons to be made” between the current research and future research on the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California (Shenton, 2004, p. 73).

Limitations

This study was limited by the sample size. There are 51 charter schools in San Bernardino County (California Department of Education, 2019a). This small sample size would limit the generalizability of results to charter school principals within San Bernardino County. Of those charter schools, eight charter school principals were excluded from the research due to being part of my charter school district. I am a charter school principal in San Bernardino County. To minimize potential bias, a positionality memo about my background as a charter school principal in San Bernardino County will be included in my dissertation to show external and internal aspects of education that influenced my research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Significance

Studies are significant for influencing practice, affecting policy, or generating future research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A study that examined charter school principals’ perceptions of self-efficacy as they implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools was significant for its potential influence on practice. It would

provide a basis for other charter school principals to learn about how their levels of perceived self-efficacy might impact their implementation of ESSA in their charter schools. Creating a basis for other charter school principals was significant because there are limited studies that directly address school principal efficacy with ESSA (Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). Thus, this study has practical importance for the instructional practices of charter school principals.

This study was also significant to research on the problem statement. Current research has established that charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy are not well enough understood to determine their effective implementation of ESSA in their respective charter schools (Fuller et al., 2017; Klocko et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018; Urick et al., 2018).

By providing evidence of charter school principals' perceptions and beliefs regarding their abilities to implement ESSA effectively in their respective charter schools, a contribution to the field of public education will be made to fulfill the identified gap in the problem statement. The results would contribute to the area of public education by providing insight on how the implementation of federal sanctions affected the self-efficacy of charter school principals. In addition, leaders at different levels of governance can use this research to develop professional development training for charter school principals that need assistance with implementing federal mandates in their charter schools.

Also, this study has potential implications for positive social change by preventing charter schools from closing due to low levels of self-efficacy in charter

school principals. California has a low retention rate for charter school principals (California Department of Education; 2019b). School superintendents can use the research from this case study to develop professional development training that builds self-efficacy in charter school principals. This would foster higher levels of perceived self-efficacy in charter school principals, which would allow charter school principals to operate their charter schools effectively by upholding federal mandates (Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). By building self-efficacy in charter school principals, charter schools will remain open to students that need a different approach to public education in California (California Charter Schools Association, 2019b).

Summary

This chapter included an overview of the proposed research study by providing an understanding of the need to learn about the perceived efficacy levels of charter school principals who implement the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools. The limited knowledge on this educational topic in Southern California can lead to inadequate professional development for public school principals. Therefore, this study was conducted to add to the body of knowledge on the self-efficacy of public school principals and their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. The information provided in this chapter was the foundation of this research study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature as it relates to the self-efficacy of charter school principals and the Every Student Succeeds Act. In Chapter 3, a description of the research design and methodology used in this study will be presented. In Chapter

4, the results of this study will be presented. And in Chapter 5, the results will be discussed along with recommendations for future research and implications for positive social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

ESSA in Southern California created multiple accountability measures for the state's principals, including those of charter schools. Charter school principals who were deemed "chronically low performing" in fulfilling the various accountability measures of ESSA faced professional consequences (i.e., the revocation of licenses for their schools) from the California Charter School Association and the California Department of Education (Reed & Rose, 2018, p. 355). The California Charter School Association will also revoke the memberships of low performing charter school principals, which will hinder them from opening new charter schools. Charter school principals in California cannot operate their respective charter schools without the full support of the California Charter School Association or the California Department of Education (Reed & Rose, 2018). Thus, it is vital that all charter school principals demonstrate high performance accomplishments with ESSA to keep their schools in operation.

Understanding the implementation of ESSA in charter schools requires researchers to understand the self-efficacy of charter school principals. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implemented the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California. Current research has established that charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy were not well enough understood to determine their effective implementation of ESSA in their respective charter schools (Fuller et al., 2017; Klocko et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018; Urick et al., 2018).

I begin this chapter by discussing the literature search strategy. I then discuss the theoretical framework of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, with an emphasis on self-efficacy and its relationship to charter school principals. In the literature review that follows, I describe the origins of self-efficacy and its ties to charter school principals. The next section of the review includes an examination of the effects of high and low levels of self-efficacy in school principals, which is followed by a discussion of the multiple accountability measures of the ESSA for charter school principals.

Literature Search Strategy

The electronic education databases examined included ProQuest Central, Education Source, ERIC, EBSCOhost, SAGE Journals, Academic Search Complete, and Google Scholar. The key search terms were *self-efficacy*, *forms of self-efficacy*, *social cognitive theory*, *charter school principals*, *principal self-efficacy*, *California*, and *the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Most of the literature search focused on studies published between 2015 and 2019. Literature outside of this publication time frame was included to provide a theoretical background to the current literature review.

Theoretical Framework

I based the theoretical framework for this study on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, which I used to explain the personal efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California. Bandura argued that self-efficacy was derived from a person's "mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal" (p. 191). Self-efficacy determines whether an individual will perform his or her job effectively when faced with "obstacles or aversive experiences" in the

workplace (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). Applied within the field of education, principals of charter schools who successfully implement the accountability measures of federal mandates (i.e., ESSA) in Southern California will gain mastery experience (see Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018). Their performance accomplishments would lead to effective instructional leadership practices, which would boost their levels of perceived self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018). To restate, the research question was, How do charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California? The self-efficacy of principals shapes their instructional leadership behaviors (Hallinger et al., 2018). Exploring charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy may add to understanding of how Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy affects public education.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Origins of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy originated as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). As part of the social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs are constructed from four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states or emotional arousals. High and low levels of perceived self-efficacy dictate the overall actions and behaviors of individuals (Bandura, 1977).

Performance accomplishments are based on mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977). The confidence that individuals gain from successful past experiences is considered a

mastery experience (Bandura, 1977). For example, principals of charter schools in the past received recognition from the California Charter School Association, the Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and the California Department of Education once they met the multiple accountability measures of ESSA (i.e., increased student performance on standardized assessments, low chronic absenteeism, high graduation rates, and low suspension rates; Reed & Rose, 2018). This form of recognition was a performance accomplishment for charter school principals. By meeting the multiple accountability measures of ESSA for 1 year, charter school principals could retain the accreditation for their respective schools for 6 years (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2019; see also Reed & Rose, 2018). The research by Reed and Rose (2018) demonstrated that charter school principals will continue to meet the accountability measures of federal mandates based on their past successful experiences with ESSA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act. This was described by Bandura (1977) described as a mastery experience, which is a form of perceived self-efficacy. Therefore, charter school principals who had past success with implementing the multiple accountable measures of federal mandates would most likely have high levels of perceived self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1977; Reed & Rose, 2018).

The second source of self-efficacy is vicarious experience. Individuals observe successful outcomes in others, which, in turn, boosts their levels of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) wrote, "Seeing others perform dangerous activities without adverse consequences can generate expectations in observers that they,

too, will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts” (p. 197). People who followed the same successful steps as others would avoid negative situations and conflicts (Bandura, 1977). A vicarious experience can strengthen an individual’s level of perceived self-efficacy. For example, charter school principals who witnessed the success of other principals might model the same instructional leadership practices in their respective schools (see Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018). If these charter school principals received the same awards and accolades as their role models, then the vicarious experience would increase their levels of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018).

The third source of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion, which refers to the confidence that individuals gain from positive feedback (Bandura, 1977). Because it does not generate tangible recognition from organizations, it is not effective in boosting perceived levels of self-efficacy in individuals such as charter school principals who have careers (Bandura, 1977). Verbal persuasion is useful in boosting levels of perceived self-efficacy in children (Bandura, 1977). Children gain confidence from positive feedback. Verbal persuasion is often used by charter school principals on students to boost their confidence before they take standardized assessments (Bandura, 1977; Reed & Rose, 2018).

The fourth source of self-efficacy consists of physiological states and emotional arousals. Individuals gain confidence from physiological or psychological feedback (Bandura, 1977). Highly charted emotional and physiological states “usually debilitate performance, individuals are more likely to expect success when they are not beset by

aversive arousal than if they are tense and viscerally agitated” (Bandura, 1977, p. 198).

Therefore, physiological states and emotional arousals are known to undermine an individual’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1977) posited that mastery experiences and performance accomplishments were the most effective in instilling a strong sense of self-efficacy in individuals. Positive experiences resulted in higher levels of perceived self-efficacy, which allowed individuals to achieve accomplishments in their personal lives and performance accomplishments in their careers (Bandura, 1977). In contrast, negative experiences and failures lead to poor performance in individuals, which lowered their levels of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) believed that individuals needed just one successful experience from the past to increase their levels of perceived self-efficacy. Considering the current accountability climate in education, charter school principals need to remember their past success with other federal mandates to increase their resilience and efficacy in implementing the multiple accountability measures of the Every Student Succeeds Act (Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018).

Principals’ Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

According to Saldaña (2016), perception was the viewpoint of an individual toward a cause, outcome, or a person. In contrast, principals’ perceptions were based on instructional leadership, school culture, teachers, and student performance on standardized assessments (Smith et al., 2003). Researchers have found that school principals’ perceptions of self-efficacy were linked to their work-related performances

and their willingness to tackle difficult tasks (Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017).

In a study by Smith et al. (2003), the researchers discovered that principals that worked in schools in which many students were on free and reduced lunch were committed to improving the teaching and learning environments of their schools (Smith et al., 2003). These 284 principals from 12 states reported that they had firmer self-efficacy beliefs in their instructional leadership and school management roles (Smith et al., 2003, p. 506). In contrast, principals reported lower self-efficacy beliefs when they perceived that too much time was being devoted to management practices instead of instructional leadership (Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018; Smith et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2017). They felt that federal mandates were interfering with their instructional leadership positions (Smith et al., 2003). These principals viewed themselves as school managers instead of instructional leaders (Smith et al., 2003). This was significant given the importance placed upon principal self-efficacy beliefs and principal involvement in instructional leadership. Future research was suggested to investigate: (a) the relationships between federal mandates and principals perceptions of self-efficacy beliefs, (b) why principals spend most of their time in management roles; and (c) if principals perceive the amount of time they are devoting to instruction as appropriate (Smith et al., 2003).

Effects of High and Low Levels of Self-Efficacy in School Principals

The instructional leadership practices of charter school principals were affected positively and negatively by their high and low levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977;

Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017). Charter school principals would need high levels of self-efficacy to overcome the multiple challenges (i.e., lack of financial support) of implementing the multiple accountability measures of the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charters (Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017). The federal mandate would require charter school principals to fulfill complex leadership positions (Gawlik, 2018).

In a study of 544 school principals from Virginia, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) developed the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) to measure high and low levels of perceived self-efficacy in principals. This instrument measured 18 items clustered into three subscales of principal behavior (management, instructional leadership, and moral leadership) using 9-point Likert scales that were aligned with the professional standards of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The first subscale centered on a principal's efficacy in managing a school (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The second subscale focused on efficacy and instructional leadership (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). And the third subscale, measured self-efficacy and moral leadership [i.e., ability to promote a positive school culture] (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) found that school principals that scored between 0.74 and 0.85 on PSES in management, instructional leadership, or moral leadership had high levels of perceived self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 580). Whereas school principals that scored between 0.11 and 0.50 on PSES in management, instructional leadership, or moral

leadership had low levels of perceived self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 580).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) concluded that school principals with high levels of perceived self-efficacy were resilient and adapted their strategies to meet work-related conditions (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Even when obstacles interfered with their goals, high efficacy principals would remain calm and confident (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). In contrast, low efficacy principals were found to perceive their unsuccessful strategies as failures (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). They would internalize these failures, which caused them to experience mental distress (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The strength of this approach was that the researchers used a large sample size of public school principals. The generalizability of findings from the sample population represented the entire population of public school principals in Virginia (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The lack of a written narrative is an inherent weakness of this quantitative approach.

In a study conducted by Kelleher (2016), principals with low self-efficacy were found to perform poorly when faced with accountability pressures from federal and state mandates. Also, the principals with low self-efficacy negatively affected their schools “during a period of change” (Kelleher, 2016, p. 70). The new policies became obstacles to their instructional leadership (Kelleher, 2016). The principals doubted their abilities to simultaneously run their schools, implement new policy changes, and meet the timelines required by the state and federal government (Kelleher, 2016). In contrast, high efficacy principals had a great sense of confidence in maintaining effective leadership, effective

schools, and effective implementation timelines (Kelleher, 2016). They were able to find role models that were successful with state and federal implementations (Kelleher, 2016). Bandura (1977) referred to this method of self-efficacy as a vicarious experience. Also, some high efficacy principals received assurances of success from state and local community members (Kelleher, 2016). This was known as a form of verbal persuasion in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). The strength of this qualitative approach is the researcher was able to understand the phenomenon. The weakness was the small sample size of participants.

Principal Self-Efficacy: Instructional Leadership

The self-efficacy of principals (confidence and capacity to fulfill the principal role) shapes their instructional leadership behaviors (Hallinger et al., 2018). A study conducted on 111 principals in Iran revealed a positive statistically significant relationship (p-value of 0.05) between principal self-efficacy and instructional leadership behaviors (Hallinger et al., 2018, p. 800). Instructional leadership behaviors are defined as having a school mission, managing the school's instructional program, and developing a positive school learning climate (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger et al., 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The self-efficacy of principals determined whether their instructional leadership behaviors would impact student learning, school quality, and school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2018).

Hallinger et al. (2018) indicated that school leaders with high levels of self-efficacy were better in communicating their performance expectation to teachers and students. As a result, instructional leadership was a key component of principal self-

efficacy. A principal's self-efficacy and instructional leadership would have the most influence on school performance, teachers, and students (Hallinger et al., 2018).

In another study of principal self-efficacy, Liu and Hallinger (2018) found that the mediated-effects model of instructional leadership motivated, supported, and sustained principals in China. The mediated-effects model required principals to develop time management skills (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Principals with daily management routines (i.e., coaching teachers, evaluating curriculum, or conducting classroom walkthroughs) were more successful in maintaining their instructional leadership practices than principals that saved management routines for the end of the (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). The mediated-effects model of instructional leadership revealed that time management reduces stress, improves self-efficacy levels, and enhances the overall well-being of school principals (Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

Principal Self-Efficacy: School Management

Smith et al. (2003) conducted a 12-state survey on principal self-efficacy and effective school management. Principals with a large population of low socioeconomic students reported higher self-efficacy beliefs in their school management skills when extra duties were removed from their list of responsibilities (Smith et al., 2003). These principals felt well-suited for their jobs when more time was devoted to instructional leadership and school management (Smith et al., 2003). Yet, what happened when external impediments like federal and state mandates cannot be removed from a principal's list of responsibilities and duties? Smith et al. (2003) stated that these principals would encounter barriers to having high levels of self-efficacy. To counter this

issue, Smith et al. (2003) recommended professional development training for principals grounded in the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy to provide principals with opportunities to complete real-world scenarios of implementing federal mandates in their schools. The training would expose principals to vicarious experiences, which would test and strengthen their self-efficacy levels (Bandura, 1977; Smith et al., 2003).

The Every Student Succeeds Act and Charter School Principals

On December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). This educational law reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with an additional focus on dropout rates, graduation rates, suspension rates, and college enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The federal government mandates that all public schools follow this act by using federal funds (Title I and Title II) to improve the quality of their curriculum, content standards, teachers, school principals, and annual standardized assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Professional Development Requirement for the Every Student Succeeds Act

According to Fuller et al. (2017), the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed to ensure that state staff public schools with effective principals. The federal law provided financial provisions to states that recruited, prepared, and retained effective principals (Fuller et al., 2017). In California, as part of ESSA, Local Educational Agencies (i.e., school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education) must provide their school administrators with professional development training to:

- establish clear and sound instructional goals

- develop data-driven decisions
- stay knowledgeable of state and federal mandates
- use effective instructional strategies to meet academic content standards
- have instructional leadership skills that can lead a school through powerful educational instructional program change (California Department of Education, 2019)

These professional development programs were based on Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy (California Department of Education, 2019; Kelleher, 2016). The state legislators had a working knowledge of self-efficacy, and they created successful professional development programs to improve self-efficacy in principals (California Department of Education, 2019; Kelleher, 2016). A key assumption behind this professional development training was that all public school principals including charter school principals would effectively implement the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in California (California Department of Education, 2019; Fuller et al., 2017; Kelleher, 2016; Reed & Rose, 2018). Fostering principals' self-efficacy with professional development programs would help principals navigate the increasingly challenging demands of state and federal mandates (Kelleher, 2016).

Multiple Accountability Measures of the Every Student Succeeds Act

The California School Dashboard Report and the College and Career Indicator are the two accountability systems used by the California Department of Education to track the multiple measures of ESSA (California Department of Education, 2019; Reed & Rose, 2018). Charter school principals were required by the state to submit data to these

two accountability systems every school year (California Department of Education, 2019; Reed & Rose, 2018). The data needed to indicate increased student performance on standardized assessments, a deduction in chronic absenteeism, increased graduation rates, and a reduction in suspension rates (Reed & Rose, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Charter school principals were required to meet the minimum performance indicators of these frameworks or they risked having their charters closed by the California Charter Schools Association (Reed & Rose, 2018).

The multiple measure approach to accountability has caused charter school principals to work overtime (Mitani, 2018). These new work demands might increase charter school principals' job stress, lower their self-efficacy, and lead to principal turnover (Mitani, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018; Tran, 2017). Studies in education have revealed that multiple job demands can negatively affect principals' well-being if they do not receive social support from co-workers, friends, or family members (Mitani, 2018; Reed & Rose, 2018; Tran, 2017).

Summary

Charter school principals have existed in the public school system for more than 30 years, and the number has grown dramatically in Southern California over the past decade (California Charter Schools Association, 2019; Gawlik, 2018). This increase was due to parents and politicians being dissatisfied with traditional public schools (Gawlik, 2018; p. 540). They sought school leaders that were willing to build alternative public schools that were based on students, curriculum, and innovation instead of district regulations (Gawlik, 2018).

The charter school movement in Southern California has indicated that charter school principals excel in federal mandates due to their non-bureaucratic approach to public education (California Charter Schools Association, 2019). Principals of charter schools use innovative instructional leadership practices to increase student learning for low-income students effectively, students with disabilities, and minority students (California Charter Schools Association, 2019; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018). These unique instructional leadership practices require charter school principals to possess high levels of self-efficacy and instructional leadership knowledge (Klocko et al., 2018).

There has been minimal research on charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy in California as they implement the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective schools. This was the gap in the literature. Understanding the personal efficacy of charter school principals who implement ESSA in their respective schools is essential to understanding the school reform movement in Southern California.

In Chapter 3, a description of the research design and methodology used in this study will be presented. The rationale for this study, the central concept and phenomenon of interest, the role of the researcher, methodology, and steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and ethical protections of participants will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implemented the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California. Charter school principals use a different approach to implement federal mandates in their respective charter schools than traditional public school principals (Fuller et al., 2017; Gawlik et al., 2017). The problem, according to researchers, was that charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy are not well enough understood to determine their effective implementation of the Act (Fuller et al., 2017; Klocko et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Mitani, 2018; Urick et al., 2018).

In this chapter, I will explain the methodology involved in researching this case study. The first section includes details on the research design and rationale for this study, the role of the researcher, and methodology. The second section includes a description of the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and ethical protections of participants and data collection.

Research Design and Rationale

The central topic for this qualitative study was the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California. The phenomenon was the impact of ESSA on the self-efficacy of charter school principals. The central research was, How do charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California? I developed the research question based on an extensive literature review and knowledge of the current phenomenon regarding charter

school principals in Southern California. The findings may provide charter school principals and charter school superintendents with insight on self-efficacy and federal mandates.

I drew from the qualitative research tradition in designing and conducting the study. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), qualitative research centers on the pursuit of understanding of how people interact with the world and how a phenomenon affects specific populations. Qualitative researchers are interested in the experiences of individuals and events (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The central aspects of qualitative research include conducting fieldwork in a natural setting, ensuring that the researcher is the primary instrument in the study, paying careful attention to process and relationships, maintaining fidelity to participants, and placing importance on inductive understanding and methods (Merriam, 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These critical components of qualitative research allow the researcher to engage with people to understand their perspectives, experiences, and events (Creswell, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The commonly used methodological approaches to qualitative research are case study research, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative analysis (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Grounded theory is a methodological approach in which the researcher uses abstracts of a theory to ground the viewpoints of participants (Creswell, 2014). The theoretical framework for this study was based on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. Because this was not an abstract theory, the grounded theory approach was rejected. Phenomenological research is an approach in which the researcher describes a phenomenon through the

lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2014). Although phenomenology could have revealed essential findings related to the self-efficacy of charter school principals, this methodological approach was rejected due to its being solely based on data from interviews (Creswell, 2014). I also rejected the ethnography approach due to its focus on the behaviors and customs of a cultural group for an extended amount of time (Creswell, 2014). I collected data for the current study during one school year, which was too short a time frame for the ethnography approach. The narrative research approach was rejected for similar reasons. It takes several years for researchers to combine aspects of their lives with aspects of their participants' lives into a collaborative narrative (Creswell, 2014).

I chose the case study design for this study. Case studies are bounded by a phenomenon and a specific location (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Researchers develop an in-depth analysis of a case (bounded unit) or situations (confined systems) in a specific location to gain insight on information that highlights and explains the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). The bounded unit chosen for this study was charter school principals of charter schools within San Bernardino County in Southern California. The specific location of Southern California allowed me to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, the case study design was the most appropriate research method for my study.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is based on the researcher's positionality and social identity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Positionality refers to the researcher's role in relationship to the setting of the research or community involved in it

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 11). Social identity encompasses the researcher's gender, race, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because the researcher is the primary instrument of qualitative research, reflexivity must be an ongoing process to address the researcher's role and influence in the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This includes self-reflections of biases, research settings, and selection of participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Currently, I am a charter school principal. I am a resident of San Bernardino County, which is located within Southern California. I have professional relationships with charter school principals within an charter school district, which was eliminated from my case study to minimize the potential risk of bias. Charter school principals who were not associated with this charter school district and who worked within San Bernardino County were my primary source of data collection and data analysis. My social identity and positionality were identical to other charter school principals in the county. This allowed me to share a relationship with participants based on a shared professional region and culture (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To maintain validity, I addressed my social identity and positionality with my participants (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reflexivity was used throughout the research process to minimize potential bias (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, validity was achieved by using triangulation and situating the case study in the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

I used the California Department of Education's (2019a) website to select participants from the public listing of charter school principals in California. There are currently 51 charter schools in San Bernardino County (California Department of Education, 2019a). Using the publicized listing of e-mail addresses, I sent electronic invitations and surveys to the 51 charter school principals in San Bernardino County. Because recruitment resulted in too few participants, I sent out additional electronic invitations and surveys to the 51 charter school principals once a week. I stopped once I reached my sample population of at least five participants.

I used criterion sampling to recruit appropriate participants. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that sampling criteria be based on participants' self-identification. For this case study, the only sampling criteria was that participants identify themselves as charter school principals in San Bernardino County. This criterion sampling strategy ensured that generalizations made about the target population of charter school principals could be applied to the total population of charter school principals in San Bernardino County. This sampling strategy limits the generalizability of results to charter school principals within San Bernardino County. Traditional public school principals, private school principals, and charter school assistant principals were excluded from the sample population.

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), data saturation is the "point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges with respect to the newly

constructed theory...and you can speak back to the goals in your research questions” (p. 266). In this study, the targeted sample size was five participants; however, I would continue to collect data from additional participants to reach the point of data saturation. This will be achieved once the data stops adding new information to Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, fills the gaps in the charter school principal self-efficacy phenomenon, and answers my research question.

Instrumentation

Surveys. A secure private server was used to e-mail the invitations and surveys to participants. Participation in this study was voluntary. Pseudonyms replaced the personally identifiable information of participants. This ensured confidentiality. The invitation had brief background information about the case study. A link to SurveyMonkey was attached to the e-mail. Participants reviewed the consent form which was the first page of the online survey. They would click “continue” to indicate their consent and complete the survey. The survey included a demographic questionnaire and the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES; Appendix A). The demographic questionnaire enabled me to notice patterns with the target group of participants by asking questions about age, gender, ethnicity, years of instructional leadership in a charter school, and the number of school changes as a charter school principal. The Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) to measure high and low levels of perceived self-efficacy in principals. The PSES contained questions clustered into three subscales of principal self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The first subscale addressed a principal’s perception

of efficacy in managing a school, the second subscale focused on a principal's understanding of instructional leadership, and the third subscale was based on a principal's perception of moral leadership (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). To maintain content validity, I used the same questions, categories, and themes from the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The expected completion time for the demographic questionnaire and the PSES was 10-15 minutes.

Interviews. Semi-structure interviews were conducted to gather data about charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy as they implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective schools. The interviews were recorded using my digital audio recorder. The interviews were virtual video conferences. The length of the interviews was 30 to 45 minutes.

The interview questions were developed based on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, the research by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) regarding principals' sense of efficacy, and the multiple accountability measures of the Every Student Succeeds Act (chronic absenteeism, dropout rates, graduation rates, suspension rates, academic performance on standardized assessments in mathematics and language art) to obtain answers for the central research question (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Before the interviews, I gained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board. The interview questions are provided in Appendix B. All interviews were digitally recorded. After each interview, within 72 hours, participants were e-mailed an electronic transcription of their interviews to verify their responses. If

errors and omissions were found, then participants had the opportunity to communicate them to me by e-mail.

Data Analysis Plan

Interviews. I collected data from the interviews by using a digital audio recorder. I transcribed, summarized, and coded the data for themes and concepts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The coding research method was utilized to gather qualitative data on the central research question.

For data analysis, I followed the five steps for responsive interviews:

1. Transcribe and summarize
2. Code for relevant concepts and themes
3. From across interviews, find the same code and sort them into a single data file
4. Sort and resort the material for each file by comparing the excerpts between subgroups
5. Integrate descriptions from different interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 190)

The coding decisions were based on the theoretical framework of this study (Saldaña, 2016). For the first cycle of coding, each transcript was coded individually for Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and the phenomenon regarding the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California. The direct language from the participant formulated the appropriate code. Descriptive codes, causation codes, and in-vivo codes were used to describe the phenomenon, reveal the complexity of

motives that affected the phenomenon and emphasize the participants' understanding of the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2016). In the second cycle of coding, the data was reanalyzed through the first cycle methods (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern coding was utilized to group the first cycle of codes into smaller categories and themes (Saldaña, 2016). Themes were generated based on the codes and categories (Saldaña, 2016).

Surveys. The Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale gathered qualitative measurements for the central research question by finding high and low levels of perceived self-efficacy in charter school principals (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) developed scoring directions for researchers to follow as they use the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale in their studies. Measures were taken and grouped into three categories for principal self-efficacy: management, instructional leadership, and moral leadership (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). With permission from Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, I coded the responses of participants into the three categories instead of calculating the means for the categories. Appendix C contains permission documentation to use the instrument.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is often questioned for trustworthiness by quantitative researchers due to their naturalistic work (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). In this case study, I worked to build integrity, creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability with my research.

Credibility

I demonstrated credibility by revealing an accurate picture of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004). Internal validity was established by only measuring the data within the research (Shenton, 2004). To accurately record the phenomenon, I adopted a well-established research method, used triangulation, held regular debriefing sessions with superiors, and examined previous research to frame findings. (Shenton, 2004, p. 73). For this qualitative study, the literature review framed the current investigation by examining research on the progressive charter school movement in California, the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act and the self-efficacy of traditional public school principals. The well-established case study design by Yin (2004) was used as the qualitative research method. Triangulation was used to enrich the validity of the limited case by utilizing different data methods (surveys, interviews, and PSES). And lastly, I had a standing appointment with my dissertation chair to discuss progress and challenges with my case study.

Transferability

Transferability was addressed in this study. I provided future researchers with detailed descriptions of the phenomenon and other context characteristics to allow comparisons to be made between my research and future research on the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California (Shenton, 2004).

The following information demonstrated transference in this case study:

- the number of participants taking part in the research and where they were located

- restrictions in the type of participants who contributed data
- the data collection methods that were employed
- the number and length of the data collection sessions
- the time over which the data was collected (Shenton, 2004, p. 70)

Dependability

To ensure dependability, I was transparent about my research design and its implementation (Shenton, 2004). Detailed descriptions of what was planned and what was executed was highlighted in the research's findings. Also, the operational details of data gathering were shown for future researchers to replicate the findings (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

To promote confirmability in this case study, I maintained a positionality memo with my reflections, thoughts, and opinions on the various data sources, data collection methods, and coding process to minimize the effects of investigator bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Also, triangulation ensured that the themes that emerged from the multiple data sources were the result of the phenomenon and not the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Procedures

The ethical challenges of protecting privacy, minimizing harm, and respecting the shared experience of participants was addressed throughout the research process for this case study. Before starting the research, I gained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board. The approval number for this study was 05-29-20-0721785.

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Ethical procedures were followed by obtaining informed consent from participants. Participants signed electronic consent forms. The consent forms ensured that the participant's privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were protected throughout the case study by using pseudonyms to replace names and other identifying facts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, I obtained permission from Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) to use the Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale (PSES, Appendix A) as part of the survey instrument in this case study. I also obtained permission from Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) to perform qualitative measurements (i.e., coding for categories) on the PSES instead of using the author's quantified scoring guide for calculating the means for each category.

Data will be stored in two secure locations for at least five years. Electronic files (i.e., recorded interviews, surveys, and consent forms) were protected by an encrypted password on my computer. Physical files (i.e., interview transcripts and approval letter from Tschannen-Moran and Gareis) were locked in a filing cabinet at my residence. After five years, data disposal will occur using two methods. Electronic files will be deleted from the researcher's computer, computer server, and internet (i.e., SurveyMonkey). Physical files will be destroyed by using a paper shredder. This will minimize confidentiality breaches (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Summary

The qualitative case study method was chosen to explore the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern

California. Criterion sampling was utilized by using California Department of Education's database of publicized charter school principals in San Bernardino to select participants. Semi-structured interviews and surveys generated qualitative responses that addressed the phenomenon of charter school principals in Southern California. Also, ethical procedures were outlined to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants.

In Chapter 4, the results of this study will be shown. Information about the setting, demographics and characteristics of participants, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary of findings will be presented.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implemented the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California. I used an exploratory, single case study design. I collected data on five charter school principals by using demographic questionnaires, surveys containing the Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), and semi structured interviews. In this chapter, I will present information about the setting, demographics and characteristics of participants, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness for this study. The chapter will conclude with the results and summary of the findings as they relate to the central research question, which was, How do charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California?

Setting

The setting of this study was San Bernardino County, Southern California. At the time that I conducted the study, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) had led the California Department of Education to issue an emergency physical closure of all public schools for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year (California Department of Education, 2020). Public school principals (traditional and charter) had 1 week to implement Governor Gavin Newsom's distance learning guidelines to continue receiving state and federal funding for their schools. These new conditions might have influenced

participants or their experiences at the time of this study and subsequently influenced the interpretation of results.

Demographics

Five charter school principals made up the sample. I used the criterion sampling approach to select charter school principals from San Bernardino County in Southern California. Table 1 shows the demographic information of participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Type of school	Years of experience in charter schools	Years as a charter school principal
Tom	Male	White	Elementary	11	1
Selena	Female	Hispanic	Middle-high school	1	1
Tony	Male	Hispanic	High school	10	8
Ben	Male	White	High school	4	4
Alice	Female	White	Elementary	6	4

The demographic information in Table 1 illustrates that the participants were charter school principals from San Bernardino County in Southern California. Three men and two women were included in this case study. Their ages ranged from 35 to 54 years old.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board to conduct research, I undertook the recruitment of potential participants. I used the California Department of Education's (2019a) website to select potential participants from the public listing of charter school principals in California. My potential participants' e-mail addresses were publicized on the website (California Department of

Education, 2019a). Once I obtained this information in early June 2020, I sent electronic invitations (Appendix D) and informed consent forms to the 51 charter school principals in San Bernardino County. Within 24 hours, three participants gave me their informed consent by clicking on the SurveyMonkey link within the electronic invitation to complete my surveys (Appendix A) and questionnaires (Appendix B). Over the next 2 weeks, I sent out the electronic invitations to the remaining 46 charter school principals until I reached a sample population of five participants.

From mid-June 2020 to early July 2020, I used the Zoom video conference platform to conduct semi structured interviews with my five participants. I gave my participants the following pseudonyms: Tom, Selena, Tony, Ben, and Alice. I interviewed each charter school principal separately for 30-45 minutes. There were no variations in data collection from the plan that I presented in Chapter 3. Other than the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no unusual circumstances encountered in data collection.

Data Analysis

I used multiple data collection sources (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, and semi structured interviews) to understand the phenomenon and explore the central research question. SurveyMonkey sent me an e-mail notification once participants completed my online demographic questionnaire and the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (Appendix A). I manually transcribed interviews using Microsoft Word. Participants reviewed all their data from the multiple data sources to ensure accuracy of information and trustworthiness of data. Surveys, questionnaires, and interview transcriptions were

manually coded using descriptive, pattern, and in-vivo coding to document patterns and develop four distinct themes that were prevalent in all data sets.

First cycle coding. I coded the multiple data sources (transcripts, demographic questionnaire, and the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale) individually for demographic information, relevance to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, and relevance to the study phenomenon, the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California. Descriptive codes and in-vivo codes were used to describe the phenomenon and emphasize the participants' understanding of the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2016).

During my initial reading of the data, I went through each transcript and survey line-by-line to generate descriptive codes based on the pre-defined themes given to me by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis for using their Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale in my research. This maintained content validity. This concept-driven approach ensured that the three areas of interest (i.e., school management, instructional leadership, and moral leadership) from previous research were coded in my data sets (see Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). A few examples of descriptive codes that I generated from the Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale were POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT and COMBATS NEGATIVE MEDIA IMAGE. For the interviews, I created descriptive codes like VISIONARY LEADERS and COVID-19 PANDEMIC to capture the essence of my participants' statements. I had a little over 60 codes from first cycle coding.

Second cycle coding. I reanalyzed the data through my first cycle coding methods. I read through my surveys and transcripts line-by-line to generate open codes

based on the participants' responses to my questions. Then, I went back and recoded all their responses again. I used pattern coding to group the first cycle of codes into smaller categories and themes (see Saldaña, 2016). The initial codes were clustered into four categories (i.e., charter school management, instructional leadership, moral leadership, and COVID-19 instructional leadership). For example, CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATION was an open code related to school management. SHAPING THE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES NECCESARRY TO MANAGE A CHARTER SCHOOL as the pattern code choice for this fourth cluster made sense for this category. These pattern codes allowed me to develop a new category and theme based on the coronavirus pandemic. The categories, pattern codes, and number of participants' occurred responses are depicted in Table 2 through Table 5:

Table 2

Category 1 Charter School Management from Pattern Codes

Number of Occurred Responses	Pattern Codes
4	handling the time demands of being a charter school principal
5	maintaining control of daily schedule
5	prioritizing among competing demands of being a charter school principal
5	handling LCAP paperwork required to operate a charter school as part of ESSA
5	ESSA implementation
5	shaping the operational procedures that are necessary to manage a charter school

Note. ESSA = Every Student Succeeds Act; LCAP = Local Control and Accountability Plan

Table 3

Category 2 Instructional Leadership from Pattern Codes

Number of Occurred Responses	Pattern Codes
5	motivate teachers
3	generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school
5	manage change in a school
5	create a positive learning environment
5	facilitate student learning
2	raise student achievement on standardized tests

Table 4

Category 3 Moral Leadership from Pattern Codes

Number of Occurred Responses	Pattern Codes
2	promote acceptable behavior among students
4	effectively handle the discipline of students
5	promote a positive image with the media
5	promote the prevailing values of the community within the school

Table 5

Category 4 COVID-19 Instructional Leadership from Pattern Codes

Number of Occurred Responses	Pattern Codes
4	safely provide school meals to students using drive-thru method
5	supervise students virtually during school hours
5	high-quality distance learning courses for all students

Once I established the four categories, three themes (i.e., efficacy for school management, efficacy for instructional leadership, and efficacy for moral leadership) were evident from the patten codes that reflected the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (see Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The fourth theme, ESSA and COVID-19 leadership resilience emerged from my interviews with participants about their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act during the coronavirus pandemic.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As stated in Chapter 3, I worked to build credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability with my research to ensure trustworthiness. Credibility was demonstrated in my findings by implementing two well-known qualitative strategies, triangulation and member checking (Shenton, 2004). I used different data methods (questionnaires, surveys, and semi structured interviews) to achieve triangulation and enrich the validity of the limited case. Member checking was used to validate the findings by having participants review their interview transcriptions to verify responses. Transferability was established by providing future researchers with detailed descriptions of the phenomenon and other contextual characteristics (Shenton, 2004). Providing this information may allow comparisons to be made between my research and future research on the self-efficacy of charter school principals in Southern California.

To ensure dependability, I was transparent about my research design and its implementation (see Shenton, 2004). Detailed descriptions of what was planned and what was executed are highlighted in my research's findings. Also, the operational details of data gathering were shown for future researchers to replicate the findings (see Shenton,

2004). In addition, I held regular debriefing sessions with my dissertation committee members to discuss data analysis, strategies to limit research bias, and challenges with my case study.

To promote confirmability in my case study, I implemented the strategies outlined in Chapter 3. I maintained a positionality memo with my reflections, thoughts, and opinions on the various data sources, data collection methods, and coding process to minimize the effects of investigator bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Also, triangulation ensured that the themes that emerged from the multiple data sources were the result of the phenomenon and not the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

Results

This single exploratory case study sought to find answers to the central research question, How do charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California? The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implemented the multiple accountability measures of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California (Fuller et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2017). Due to the single research question, I organized this section into four themes that emerged from coding multiple data sources (surveys, questionnaires, and transcripts from interviews). The title for three themes were based on the scoring directions for the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale created by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004). To maintain content validity, I used their three themes for principals' perceptions of self-efficacy [(efficacy for school management, efficacy for instructional leadership, and efficacy for moral

leadership)] (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The fourth theme, ESSA and COVID-19 leadership resilience emerged from my interviews with participants about their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act during the coronavirus pandemic.

Theme 1: Efficacy for School Management and ESSA

The first theme emerged from charter school principals' perceptions of their efficacy levels in school management. For example, Tom, Tony, and Selena (pseudonyms) explained their efficacy levels in school management in relation to ESSA and their stakeholders. The charter school principals believed that they had high efficacy levels in school management.

Tom, a first-year charter school principal, expressed the following:

I think I'm doing better than just making it in school management. I am constantly working during events on the weekends and nighttime things. The LCAP paperwork required of this job is demanding. I had no idea going in how many challenges there were going to be in making ESSA a priority. The federal and state guidelines was hard to implement when you only been a site for six months. And I think, if I have not been at the same charter school district for 11 years, it would have been very difficult to meet ESSA.

Tony supported Tom's statement by sharing:

Even though I am pulled in many directions, I think I have good school management. My administrative assistant handles some of my school management tasks, while my vice principal tracks our progress with ESSA. This allows me to be in the community, work with parents, students, and teachers. My

role in the principalship is to be the instructional leader not a school manager.

Yet, I do keep track of our LCAP paperwork. It's tied directly to our school funding.

Selena repeated Tony's sentiments by stating:

I prioritize my daily to do list. I have a good support system with my secretary. I give some of my management tasks to her. You have to delegate in my position.

I'm trying to think of my California dashboard. My school increased in all areas of ELA and math for ESSA, and my graduation rates is higher than traditional schools. I still have some areas for improvement with ESSA and LCAP, but I think as a charter school, we're doing really well with a lot of the assessment pieces. I'm constantly looking at my progress monitoring report on the dashboard.

Theme 2: Efficacy for Instructional Leadership

This theme emerged from the Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale and semi-structured interviews with charter school principals. The participants believed that high levels of efficacy in instructional leadership was needed to operate a charter school in Southern California. Their perceptions of efficacy in instructional leadership was based on their abilities to motivate teachers, maintain high academic standards, and facilitate student learning.

Ben expressed his efficacy in instructional leadership as being “given enough support and enough freedom to be able to help guide students and the school toward success.” Ben further emphasized:

My teachers are highly motivated. They are actively advancing academic achievements and learning for our students. It is 100 percent my responsibility to support everyone at this site. My executive director is at another site 50 miles away. I need to make sure that my teachers and I are doing the right things for our students.

Alice confirmed his statements by adding:

I believe that my teachers are highly motivated, full of integrity, and passionate about student learning. My learning environment is dynamic, rigorous, and student-centered. I am the visionary leader of the school.

Selena emphasized:

I make sure that all my students are successful using a variety of intervention, strategies, and support systems. I look at students socioeconomic status, race, and academic achievement to make sure that students have the right tools that they need to be successful. So, I definitely think I have high levels of efficacy as an instructional leader.

Theme 3: Efficacy for Moral Leadership

This theme came about due to the Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale. Once participants took the survey online, their open-ended answers matched Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) criteria for having high efficacy in moral leadership. The charter school principals perceived moral leadership as being able to promote positive student behaviors, have minimum student discipline issues, and have a positive image with the media.

All the charter school principals in this case study told me that they believed that they must counter all the negative information about charter schools with their local media outlets (i.e., newspapers, radio stations, and commercials). Ben is steadily accomplishing this task by inviting the local media to his school events. He believes that the “events will promote a positive image with the media.” In addition, he states:

My high efficacy levels in moral leadership have allowed me to build professional relationship with leading community members in San Bernardino County. I can bring people along, and help people understand where our school is going, being inclusive, get community input, parent input, and staff input.

Alice adds:

Parents bring their children to my school because they were bullied at other schools. We have zero discipline issues. No bullies. No referrals. No suspensions. My staff is great. We care about students. I’m proud to state that my school is one of the few that is blue on the state dashboard.

Theme 4: ESSA and COVID-19 Leadership Resilience

This theme emerged due to Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) argued that self-efficacy was derived from a person’s “performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states” (p. 191). This would determine whether a person would initiate coping behaviors when faced with “obstacles or aversive experiences” (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). The COVID-19 pandemic became a potential obstacle for my charter school principals as they implemented ESSA in their respective charter schools. All the charter

school principals in this case study overcame this obstacle and demonstrated that they had high levels of perceived self-efficacy and resilience. Tom affirmed:

To me, as the lead of the school, COVID-19 was not a challenge. The challenge was making sure that my kids were optimizing learning opportunities in accordance with ESSA. I know that a lot of schools were only meeting the legal bare minimum requirements set up by the state and federal government.

Ben statements are in alignment with Tom's:

We were in a pretty good spot when COVID-19 hit. Students had computers. We went from a teacher driven school to a computer-based school. Teachers used Google Classroom to fulfill the Governor's distance learning guidelines. It's funny. I'm not super old school. But a principal knows that the value of a teacher far exceeds the value of a computer program. My new teachers loved the online resources. But I had to preach to my old teachers to use the computer programs. Then, I had to teach kids to get on their computers at home and trust in our new computer programs. We met all our ESSA requirements this year but COVID-19 made it a challenge.

Selena had different insight:

COVID-19 obviously threw a wrench in everything. We still must abide by LCAP. We just don't have to conduct state testing as part of ESSA. My kids are going to be lacking some skills next year. I will have to close a two-year gap in learning. This will be a challenge next year. The biggest challenge this year was helping teachers create online courses instead of test prepping students.

Summary of Findings

This single exploratory case study sought to answer the central research question: How do charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in Southern California? The themes that emerged from data analysis are highlighted in Table 6.

Table 6

Participants' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy and ESSA

Participant	Efficacy for management of ESSA	Efficacy for instructional leadership	Efficacy for moral leadership	ESSA and COVID-19 leadership resilience
Tom	High	High	High	High
Selena	High	High	High	High
Tony	High	High	High	High
Ben	High	High	High	High
Alice	High	High	High	High

Note. ESSA = Every Student Succeeds Act; COVID-19 = coronavirus pandemic.

They are efficacy for school management and ESSA, efficacy for instructional leadership, efficacy for moral leadership, and ESSA and COVID-19 leadership resilience. The themes were consistent with Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Tschannen-Moran's and Gareis's (2004) research on principal self-efficacy. The results of this study indicated that charter school principals in San Bernardino County of Southern California had high perceptions of self-efficacy in all categories and that they successfully implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In Chapter 5, I will interpret the findings as they relate to the theoretical framework and research literature. Next, I will discuss the limitations of the study and make recommendations for further research. Then, I will conclude the chapter with implications for positive social for charter school principals.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to identify and describe the self-efficacy of charter school principals who implement the multiple accountability measures of ESSA in Southern California. I used a case study design involving surveys, questionnaires, and interviews to explore the charter school phenomenon in Southern California and to understand the perceptions of charter school principals who implement federal mandates within their respective charter schools. The findings of this qualitative study can be used by superintendents and executive directors within the charter school community to make informed decisions about their professional development trainings for charter school principals. The administrative duties of charter school principals are different than those of traditional school principals (Klocko et al., 2018). Charter school principals must develop marketing plans to enroll students, find and lease buildings, recruit teachers, and build community partnerships (Klocko et al., 2018). It is important to understand their perceptions of self-efficacy and federal mandates, especially the new ESSA. Their implementation of this federal mandate might become the standard for all public schools (charter and traditional) in Southern California.

In this chapter, I will interpret the findings using the themes discussed in Chapter 4 as they relate to the theoretical framework and research literature. Following the interpretation of findings, I will discuss the limitations of the study and make

recommendations for further research. Last, I will conclude the chapter with implications for positive social for charter school principals.

Interpretation of the Findings

Findings in Accordance With the Literature Review

This study's findings suggest that charter school principals' efficacy beliefs will influence their work ethic and implementation of the ESSA. Prior research demonstrated that traditional school principals who implemented ESSA in their respective schools in California were unable to achieve performance accomplishments and maintain effective leadership practices when obstacles emerged from this federal mandate due to their low levels of perceived self-efficacy (Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018). The charter school principals within this study corroborated the findings of Reed and Rose (2018) by being school reform change agents in this public school era of accountability in Southern California. The charter school principal participants also corroborated the findings of Gawlik (2018) by enacting instructional leadership in their respective schools even when they encountered barriers to curriculum and instruction or school climate and culture.

Furthermore, these charter school principals demonstrated "resilience in the face of setbacks" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 582) with their successful implementation of the ESSA during the coronavirus pandemic. The charter school principals in this study confirmed Tschannen-Moran and Gareis's (2004) findings that efficacy for school management, efficacy for instructional leadership, and efficacy for moral leadership were important in their perceptions of principal self-efficacy in relation

to their implementation of ESSA. My participants' high perceptions of self-efficacy allowed them to operate their respective charter schools effectively during the coronavirus pandemic.

Findings in Accordance With the Theoretical Framework

The focus of this study was on collecting data from charter school principals using the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy as the theoretical framework. The charter school principals within this study corroborated the findings of Bandura's (1977) theory by demonstrating that their personal efficacy levels were derived from mastery experience and/or performance accomplishments. In addition, the findings indicated that participants would perform their jobs effectively when faced with "obstacles or aversive experiences" in the workplace (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). Because of their perceptions of self-efficacy, the charter school principals in the study were able to successfully implement ESSA in their respective charter schools, which increased their mastery experience (see Bandura, 1977). Their performance accomplishments led to effective instructional leadership practices during the coronavirus pandemic, which boosted their levels of perceived self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1977) explained that "when faced with obstacles, setbacks, and failures, those who doubt their capabilities slacken their efforts, give up, or settle for mediocre solutions. Those who have a strong belief in the capabilities redouble their effort to master the challenge" (p. 120). A principal's sense of efficacy plays a critical role in meeting the expectations and demands of operating a charter school, especially in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. The charter school principals in this study reported

having high levels of self-efficacy, which helped them to successfully implement all the accountability measures of ESSA within their respective charter schools.

Theme 1: Efficacy for School Management and ESSA

The findings of this study indicated that charter school principal participants had high perceptions of efficacy in school management as they implemented the multiple accountability measures of ESSA within their respective charter schools. These principals' perceptions reflected findings from prior research. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) found that principals with high scores on their Principals Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale had a strong sense of self-efficacy in school management. These school principals were "found to be persistent in pursuing their goals, and more willing to adapt strategies to meeting contextual conditions" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 574). My findings confirmed that charter school principals with high perceptions of efficacy in school management were efficient in their implementations of ESSA in their schools. They simply viewed ESSA as another contextual condition for operating their charter schools in California.

Theme 2: Efficacy for Instructional Leadership

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) revealed that principals with high scores of efficacy in instructional leadership (a rating that ranged from 0.45 to 0.81) were able to establish positive learning environments in their schools and facilitate student learning in their schools (p. 580). These findings are consistent with the findings in my study on charter school principals. All charter school principals within my study mentioned that they oversaw curriculum and instruction, school climate, parent/community relations, and

school safety within their schools. Alice saw herself as the “visionary leader” of her charter school, and Ben expressed his efficacy in instructional leadership as being “given enough support and enough freedom to be able to help guide students and the school toward success.” This sentiment was echoed by all five participants in some form throughout their semi structured interviews. Prior research revealed that principals with low self-efficacy beliefs viewed themselves as school managers instead of instructional leaders (Smith et al., 2003). Thus, I was not surprised when my findings revealed that the reverse was true for charter school principals. The charter school principals in my study wanted to be viewed as instructional leaders rather than school managers.

Theme 3: Efficacy for Moral Leadership

This study indicated that charter school principals perceived their efficacy levels in moral leadership as being higher than those of traditional school principals. Previous studies confirmed this finding. Gawlik (2018) interviewed four charter school principals from Woodland County, Florida. One of the charter school principals, Juniper, a pseudonym, recalled that she “spent most of her time dealing with discipline issues” when she was a traditional school principal (Gawlik, 2018, p. 560). Gawlik’s findings confirmed that Juniper’s efficacy levels along with the other three charter school principals improved once she converted her traditional school into a charter school in 2003 (p. 545). This was due to them taking the time to develop a positive school climate and culture (Gawlik, 2018). As a result, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) confirmed that a strong indicator of moral leadership efficacy was a principal’s ability to effectively handle the discipline of students. One charter school principal within my study, Alice,

was excited to tell me that she “had zero discipline issues” within her charter school. In addition, the California Department of Education gave her school a blue rating on the California School Dashboard for not having any suspensions or expulsions. In contrast, Ben expressed that his high efficacy levels in moral leadership enabled him “to build professional relationships with leading community members in San Bernardino County.” He regularly invites the local media to all his school events to erase their negative perceptions of charter schools. “I can bring people along, and help people understand where our school is going, being inclusive, get community input,” he commented. These findings confirmed that high perceptions of efficacy in moral leadership are needed to operate a charter school.

Theme 4: ESSA and COVID-19 Leadership Resilience

All the participants mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools. Governor Gavin Newsom passed an executive order to help public schools in California through the COVID-19 pandemic (California Department of Education, 2020; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). To continue receiving state funding, public school principals had to

- deliver high-quality educational opportunities to students through distance learning and/or independent study,
- safely provide school meals through the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option,
- arrange virtual supervision of students during ordinary school hours, and

- continue to pay employees (California Department of Education, 2020).

In addition, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act, H.R. 478) passed by President Donald Trump ensured that federal funding would continue for more than 10,000 public schools in California (California Department of Education, 2020; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). In addition, state testing in English and Mathematics, an important accountability measure from the Every Student Succeeds Act was cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year (California Department of Education, 2020; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire public school system in California. Tom remembers Governor Newsom's guidelines:

In 48 hours to keep state funding, I created a system where the kids basically took school online. They went to virtual classes five days a week, four hours a day.

This pandemic was not going to permanently close my school.

Alice shared his sentiment:

I got a call from my executive director about Governor Newsom. No state testing due to COVID-19...yes! It was a struggle last year in math. We were orange on the dashboard. Um..I was told that I had to keep my lunch program to get state funding. But my school would be closed. What? That didn't make sense at first. I spent three days developing an online school and drive-thru lunch program. My lunch ladies came in three times a week with my admin assistant to pass out cold lunches in our parking lot. We made it work. I made sure that everyone had masks and glove to protect from COVID-19.

Limitations of the Study

There were two limitations with this qualitative case study on charter school principals. The first limitation stemmed from the small sample size of five participants. There are 51 charter schools in San Bernardino County (California Department of Education, 2019a). Of those charter schools, eight charter school principals were excluded from the research due to being part of my charter school district. The remaining 43 charter school principals were invited to participate in my study, and of those, five agreed to be participants. Even though I reached data saturation with five charter school principals, my generalizability of results was limited to charter school principals within San Bernardino County. Therefore, I cannot conclude that my findings are applicable to the entire population of charter school principals within California.

The second limitation was researcher bias. As a charter school principal in San Bernardino County, it was possible that I could have exhibited my own bias on charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy and their implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools. I used two research-based efforts to minimize the effects of researcher's bias. I wrote a positionality memo (Appendix E) containing my reflections, thoughts, and opinions on the various data sources and data collection methods of my study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). And lastly, I had a standing bi-weekly appointment with my dissertation chair to discuss my progress and any potential challenges with my case study (Shenton, 2004). These two efforts minimized potential researcher's bias and helped to establish trustworthiness and credibility with my case study.

Recommendations

The Every Student Succeeds Act have forced charter school principals to experience the accountability pressures from federal mandates that traditional school principals have endured for decades with the No Child Left Behind Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). This new federal mandate had the potential to increase or decrease the perceived levels of self-efficacy in charter school principals. Further research was needed to determine the perceived levels of self-efficacy in charter school principals in Southern California. My case study has started to fill the gap in the research literature by identifying and examining charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy in San Bernardino County as they implement the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective schools (Fuller et al., 2017; Gawlik et al., 2017; Klocko et al., 2018). In relation to the research literature on the self-efficacy beliefs of school principals and their abilities to overcome barriers to be instructional leaders within their schools, future studies should be conducted to have a better understanding of the charter school principal phenomenon in Southern California by:

- Replicating this case study with a larger sample population of charter school principals from other counties (i.e., Riverside County or Los Angeles County)
- Replicating this case study with the same population of charter school principals in San Bernardino County after the coronavirus pandemic

- Using a mixed-methods study to examine the relationship between charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy and the Every Student Succeeds Act and their schools' data on the California School Dashboard
- Conducting a basic qualitative study on charter school principals that left the field of education in California to examine possible causes of principal turnover (i.e., low self-efficacy levels).

The charter school movement is building momentum in Southern California. Charter school principals will need high levels of self-efficacy to overcome barriers to instructional leadership (i.e., state and federal mandates) to operate their respective charter schools.

Implications

This case study has potential implications for positive social change by bringing awareness to charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy and their implementations of federal mandates in San Bernardino County, Southern California. This population of public-charter school principals have been traditional ignored, since many school organizations viewed them in the same manner as traditional public school principals (Gawlik, 2018; Klocko et al., 2018). This study has highlighted that charter school principals respond differently to federal mandates due their different perceptions of principal self-efficacy.

The four themes from this study were efficacy for school management and the Every Student Succeeds Act, efficacy for instructional leadership, efficacy for moral leadership, and the Every Student Succeeds Act and COVID-19 leadership resilience.

These themes emerged from Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) argued that self-efficacy would determine whether a person would initiate coping behaviors when faced with "obstacles or aversive experiences" (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). These themes have highlighted that additional efforts need to be made by executive directors of charter schools within San Bernardino County to ensure that their charter school principals have high perceptions of self-efficacy. Executive directors of charter schools within this county would benefit from shifting their focus from charter school principals' implementation of federal mandates to charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy as they implement federal mandates. Since California has a low retention rate for charter school principals, executive directors need to use a different approach to keep their charter school principals in San Bernardino County (California Department of Education; 2019b). This study has potential implications for positive social change by helping executive directors of charter schools understand the importance of self-efficacy levels in charter school principals.

My findings showed that charter school principals' high perceptions of self-efficacy in San Bernardino County allowed them to efficiently implement the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective schools during the global coronavirus pandemic. By using the research from my case study, executives directors can develop professional development training that builds self-efficacy in charter school principals. This would foster higher levels of perceived self-efficacy in charter school principals, which would allow charter school principals to operate their charter schools effectively by upholding federal mandates (Bandura, 1977; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018).

By building self-efficacy in charter school principals, charter schools within San Bernardino can remain open to students that need a different approach to public education in California (California Charter Schools Association, 2019b).

This study is also significant for its potential influence on practice. My study examined charter school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy as they implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools in San Bernardino County, Southern California. It would provide a basis for other charter school principals within the county to learn about how their perceived levels of self-efficacy might impact their implementation of federal mandates in their charter schools. Creating a basis for other charter school principals was significant because there are limited studies that directly address the Every Student Succeeds Act and school principal self-efficacy levels (Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). Thus, this study has practical importance for the instructional practices of charter school principals in San Bernardino County, Southern California.

Conclusion

Research has shown that school principals' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their abilities to operate and manage their schools as instructional school leaders (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2004). There has been limited research on charter school principals implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in California, but no research has been conducted that specifically explores their perceptions of self-efficacy (Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Reed & Rose, 2018). My case study has started to fill the gap in the research literature by examining charter school principals' perceptions and

beliefs regarding their abilities to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act effectively in their respective charter schools.

The charter school movement is responsible for the openings of over 1,000 charter schools in California; however, these openings are not enough to counteract the low retention rate of charter school principals in California (California Charter Schools Association, 2019b). Charter school principals will need high levels of self-efficacy to overcome barriers to their instructional leadership, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act and the coronavirus pandemic. High perceptions of principal self-efficacy will allow charter school principals to operate their respective charter schools, regardless of these potential barriers. Executive directors of charter schools must accept that the charter school reform movement requires them to develop professional development training that builds self-efficacy in their charter school principals. This would foster higher levels of perceived self-efficacy in charter school principals, which would counter the low retention rate of charter school principals in California.

By building self-efficacy in charter school principals, the charter school reform movement will continue to grow and prosper in California. Charter school principals will continue to use their innovative instructional leadership practices to increase student learning for low-income students, students with disabilities, and minority students (California Charter Schools Association, 2019b; Gawlik, 2018; Marsh et al., 2017; Urick et al., 2018). These unique instructional leadership practices require charter school principals to possess high levels of self-efficacy and instructional leadership knowledge (Klocko et al., 2018).

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Part I: Demographics Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your gender.
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-Binary
2. Please select the category that includes your age.
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65 or Above
3. Please indicate your ethnicity.
 - White, non-Hispanic
 - Black, non-Hispanic
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Asian or Pacific Islander
 - Native American or Alaskan Indian
 - Two or More Races
4. Are you currently a charter school principal in San Bernardino County of Southern California?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Before this school year, how many years did you serve as a charter school principal of this or any other charter school?
 - None
 - 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - 21 or Above

6. Before this school year, how many years did you serve as a charter school principal of this charter school?
- None
 - 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - 21 or Above

7. Please type in your email address _____.

Part II: Principal Questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed to gain a better understanding of a principal's instructional leadership, school management, and moral leadership.

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by filling in your responses. Your answers are confidential.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

In your current role as a charter school principal, what's your perception of...

1. the learning environment for your school?
2. your school's image with the media and/or community?
3. your teachers' motivations?
4. having control of your daily schedule?
5. the paperwork required of the job?

**You have successfully completed the survey and questionnaire.
The researcher will contact you by email to set up an online interview.**

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of self-efficacy as a charter school principal?
2. How are you handling the demands of being a charter school principal in Southern California?
3. Do you believe that you have high or low levels of self-efficacy as a charter school principal?
4. What is your role and responsibility for implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act in your charter school?
5. What challenges have you faced with implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act in your charter school?
6. How do you prioritize the competing demands of the job?

Appendix C: Permission to Use the Principals' Sense of Efficacy Scale



MEGAN TSCHANNEN-MORAN, PHD
PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

January 21, 2020

Christina,

You have my permission to use the Principals' Sense of Efficacy Scale, which I developed with Chris Gareis, in your research. The best citation to use is:

Tschannen-Moran, M. & Gareis, C. (2004). Principals' sense of efficacy: Assessing a promising construct. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 42, 573-585.

You can find a copy of these measures and scoring directions on my web site at <http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch>. I will also attach directions you can follow to access my password protected web site, where you can find the supporting references for these measures as well as other articles I have written on this and related topics.

All the best,

Megan Tschannen-Moran
William & Mary School of Education

Appendix D: Invitation Letter to Participants

Dear Charter School Principal,

My name is Christina Hamilton, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. As a public charter school principal in Southern California, you have valuable insights to share regarding the statewide implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Therefore, I am inviting you to volunteer to participate in a research study that seeks to examine the self-efficacy of charter school principals who have implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act in their respective charter schools. Pseudonyms will replace your personal identifiable information. The data collected will only be used to conduct scholarly research. If you meet the description of being a public charter school principal within San Bernardino County, then I invite you to click on the SurveyMonkey link to complete the questionnaire. If you have any questions about participating in my study, then please contact me at christina.hamilton4@waldenu.edu.

Respectfully,

Christina Hamilton

Appendix E: Positionality Memo

September 1, 2019

Question: Why am I interested in charter school leadership?

My personal experience as a charter school principal in San Bernardino County of Southern California has inspired me to learn more about charter school principals in the research literature. There is a plethora of literature on traditional public school principals. The limited literature that exist on charter school principals appears to be written from the perspective of traditional principals. Charter school principals have been depicted as administrators that steal money from traditional schools (Gawlik, 2018). This is a false information. We are part of the public school system. If parents exercise their right of school choice and place their children in a public charter school over a traditional public school, then the state and federal money designated for that student must follow the student into the new school (Reed & Rose, 2018). State and federal funding is not tied to each school but rather to each student. Seeing negative research about charter school principals prompted me to study my fellow charter school principals. I know that I cannot study my own colleagues who are charter school principals within my charter school district; however, I can still perform a case study on other charter school principals within San Bernardino County. It is time for research on charter school principals to be written from the perspective of charter school principals. Will this be a quantitative or qualitative inquiry? I am interested in the perspectives of individuals. So, this will be a qualitative study.