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Angela Davis

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Ability to Provide Equitable Instructional Practices in High-Poverty Schools

by

Angela Davis

MA, Southern University, 2017

BS, Southern University 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Equitable instructional practices have a positive impact on the academic achievement of students living in high poverty. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Gorski's equity literacy framework was the approach used to guide the study and address the research question. In this qualitative study, teachers in high-poverty schools were asked to perceive and describe their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 K-8 teachers of high-poverty schools located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Thematic analysis produced three significant themes: identity crisis, experience, and principles. The participants reported that the guiding principles in their instructional visions and their experiences contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. However, the participants expressed that organizational policies and practices obstructed their abilities to provide equitable instruction. In addition, the participants desired further professional development to strengthen their ability to implement equitable instructional practices. This study's findings could contribute to district leaders' creation of professional development to enhance teachers' ability to implement equitable instructional practices. The findings contribute to positive social change by showing that K–12 organizations must have policies and practices in place to counteract the barriers to student success presented by poverty.

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Dedication

I want to give all honor to God for allowing me to persevere through this accomplishment. He has placed so many people in my life that have contributed to this goal. He has given me strength, grace, and perseverance through my doctoral journey. Without him, this accomplishment would not be possible. Next, I want to thank all the people in my life who have persevered alongside me.

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Lavanta, who has been my rock throughout this entire process. You have encouraged me through the difficult times and celebrated with me every step of the way. I greatly appreciate your dedication to ensuring that I become the best version of myself always. I appreciate all of the sacrifices you have made for me.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my sons. Lavanta and Langston, I hope my perseverance throughout this process makes you realize that you both can accomplish anything your heart desires. You both make me a better person each day! To my parents, Al and Frances, who have always supported my dreams, thank you for always encouraging me to be my best. To my siblings, who have constantly challenged me, I love and thank you.

Friends and colleagues, thank you for your encouraging words along the way. Thank you for your advice, being a shoulder to cry on, and a listening ear when I needed it. I would not have made it through this journey without all of you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I conducted semistructured, qualitative interviews with teachers to explore their perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instruction strategies in high-poverty schools. Many quantitative studies have shown positive correlations between equitable instructional practices and the academic performance of marginalized students; however, there is a need for qualitative studies on equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools to contribute to the field of education (Nadelson et al., 2019). Equitable instructional practices have positive effects on the academic achievement of students in poverty (Rubel, 2017). Therefore, exploring teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools is a way to increase classroom quality in high-poverty areas and find solutions to the persistent income achievement gap in the United States.

This study contributes to positive social change by presenting teachers' perspectives of implementing equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Research has indicated that students who live in high-poverty areas receive inequitable educational opportunities, contributing to the income achievement gap (Lipman, 2016). Equitable instructional opportunities for students are the foundation for improving the achievement scores of students from high-poverty households (Lampert et al., 2020). The income achievement gap will stagnate or widen without innovative ways to address this issue (Nadelson et al., 2019). The findings of the present study provide information on the support teachers need to implement equitable instructional practices within their classrooms. The findings also provide school and district leaders with the necessary

knowledge and tools to create relevant professional development and support equity in high-poverty schools. Chapter 1 includes a discussion of the study's background, problem, purpose, research question, conceptual framework, nature, definitions, assumptions, and significance. In this chapter, I also present the study's potential to contribute to positive social change.

Background

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, there is a 31-scaled-point difference in the reading assessment performance of high socioeconomic status and low socioeconomic status students (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2017). In a sample of 30 large, scaled assessments from 1950 to 2000, Chmielewski (2019) found a consistently increasing gap in student achievement levels, focusing on three socioeconomic status variables (i.e., parents' education, parents' occupation, and the number of books available in the home) impacting the significant increase in the nationwide, income-based achievement gap. Similarly, Owens et al. (2016) found a 40% increase in the socioeconomic achievement gap between students from high and low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The correlation between academic achievement and family income increased during the 1980s and 1990s (Engel et al., 2016). The achievement gap between high- and low-income students remains steady (Hanushek et al., 2019; Reardon et al., 2015). Chmielewski and Reardon (2016) found a significant income achievement gap in the United States compared to other countries. Reardon and Portilla (2016) reported that socioeconomic status correlated with a 1.25 deviation in student reading level upon

school entry. Studies, such as Reardon and Portilla's, have resulted in extensive research on the causes and solutions for the income achievement gap. Individuals from nearly 3 million households in the United States live in deep poverty (Engel et al., 2016). Many students who live in high-poverty areas score significantly lower than low-poverty students on achievement assessments (Heckman, 2018). In examining student developmental trends from school entry to middle school, Kuhfeld et al. (2018) found that the students in poverty fell behind in math and reading during their late elementary years. Eighty percent of students who live in high poverty score below proficient in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017).

The lack of evidence of a decreasing achievement gap between high- and low-poverty students suggests the presence of certain factors that educators at high-poverty schools may encounter while educating students of poverty (Baker-Doyle et al., 2018). Research has shown numerous factors that cause a disparity in academic achievement for students who live in high poverty, including the income invested into students' education by parents (Kyriakides et al., 2020), school readiness (Pan et al., 2019), school segregation (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016), high teacher turnover (Hanushek et al., 2016), and inequitable access to high-quality teachers (Zygmunt & Cipollone, 2019). Complex school-based and out-of-school factors affect student achievement in high-poverty schools (Hirn et al., 2017). Out-of-school factors include the home environment, motivation, concentration, and engagement (Kainz, 2019; Nicotera, 2019; Owens, 2017).

School-based factors include instructional practices, teacher quality, collective teacher efficacy, and class size (Acton, 2018; Kainz, 2019; Knight, 2017).

Inequitable school practices, policies, and events contribute to the marginalization of the students who live in poverty (DeMatthews, 2018; Skousen & Domangue, 2012). Skousen and Domangue (2012) suggested teaching critical consciousness, with school leaders developing their abilities to address inequities within classroom instruction. Substantial research has indicated positive correlations between equitable teaching practices and student achievement in high-poverty schools (Lampert et al., 2020; Steele et al., 2015; Sun & Leithwood, 2017). Equitable instructional practices focus on identifying the knowledge teachers must acquire to implement equitable instructional environments (Gorski, 2016).

Gorski (2020) identified five characteristics of equitable instructional practices that result in equitable classroom actions. One of the elements is educators' recognition of biases and inequities to immediately and skillfully respond to them. Additionally, educators can redress biases by examining the institutional roots and sustaining equity efforts even amid discomfort or resistance (Gorski, 2016). Teacher knowledge and disposition contribute to student learning in high-poverty environments, and teachers' beliefs are critical components of high-quality instructional environments (Gorski, 2016). For example, Springer et al. (2016) studied the impact of 321 highly effective teachers in high-poverty schools on student achievement and found that students within these teachers' classrooms scored a standard deviation above the state average on yearly standardized assessments. Lekwa et al. (2019) examined the correlations between

assessments of teaching practices and gains and student achievement at 13 urban schools, finding higher student achievement gains in classrooms where teachers utilized research-based instructional practices.

Problem Statement

In this study, I conducted qualitative interviews to address the lack of knowledge on teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Utilizing equitable instructional practices is a pedagogical shift in instruction requiring teachers to respond to the inequities that exist for the students they serve (Gorski, 2016). Scholars have explored the impact of teachers and other school-based factors on student achievement (Acton, 2018; Kainz, 2019; Knight, 2017). However, little research has focused on teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement equitable instructional practices to produce positive change in high-poverty students' academic achievement (Burke & Whitty, 2018; Hirn et al., 2017). Scholars have typically documented equitable practices through teachers' perspectives (Burke & Whitty, 2018). The concern for equitable instructional practices from teachers of students who live in poverty is not a new phenomenon.

Recent studies on equitable instructional practices within school systems have produced new knowledge about this phenomenon (Cramer et al., 2017). Several researchers have suggested the need for further research focusing on teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement equitable teaching practices in high-poverty schools (Baker-Doyle et al., 2018; Burke & Whitty, 2018; Jones, 2018). I built this study based on Nadelson et al.'s (2019) suggestion for further research on teachers' mindsets on

equity in their teaching practices. Nadelson et al. found that teachers framed their equitable practices consistently when they worked with students in diverse populations. Their study suggested the need to focus on teachers' perceptions of equity to develop professional development modules for schools, especially high-poverty ones. The current study was a means to address this gap in the literature. Scholars have not explored teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices as useful tools for professional development and closing the income achievement gap. The findings of the current study could contribute to the professional development of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. I attempted to answer the research question by conducting semistructured interviews and focusing on the teacher participants' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices contributed to identifying the necessary resources and professional development to implement equitable instructional practices within high-poverty schools. This study's findings could also contribute to developing organizational policies and practices to support equitable instructional practices in high-poverty school districts.

Research Question

How do teachers in high-poverty schools perceive and describe their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices?

Conceptual Framework

Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework served as this study's conceptual framework. The framework is an approach against the concept that education is the great equalizer. Gorski (2014) reported the inequalities in schools and school environments that contribute to disparities in student achievement, including access to well-funded schools, preschool, adequate school resources, support services, affirming school environments, high student expectations, experienced teachers, high-quality curriculum and pedagogy, instructional technology, and family environment within the school environment. Gorski (2016) also identified the principles of equity literacy: confrontation; poverty of culture; equity ideology; prioritization; redistribution; fix injustice, not kids; evidence-informed equity; and one-size-fits-few.

Gorski (2014) challenged popular diversity approaches and frameworks that do not adequately address marginalized people's conditions. Gorski (2020) identified five necessary abilities for equitable educators to influence positive change within education environments, including recognizing subtle biases and inequities; responding to biases and inequities; redressing biases and inequities; actively creating antioppressive cultures; and sustaining bias-free and equitable classrooms, schools, and instructional cultures.

Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework served to guide this basic qualitative study by providing structure to the interview questions. Integrating the five abilities of equitable educators into the semistructured interview questions enabled me to capture teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices in general and equitable instructional strategies specifically used in high-poverty schools. Use of Gorski's equity

literacy framework also allowed for the development of insights into the skills and dispositions teachers need to promote equitable instructional environments.

Nature of Study

The qualitative research method, an approach utilized in many social sciences, emerged through anthropology, linguistics, and sociology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), allowing scholars to derive meaning from a person's life experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Qualitative methodology is the opposite of the positivist tradition (Ravitch & Carl, 2015) because humans have multiple truths and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Research with the qualitative approach includes specific components, such as naturalist engagement, complexity, and contextualization (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Contextualization, interviews in a naturalistic environment, and making meaning of teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional strategies in high-poverty schools aligned this study with the qualitative method.

Quantitative methods were another tradition reviewed during the development of this study. Quantitative researchers collect numerical data to test predetermined hypotheses (Ary et al., 2019). Quantitative research was not a suitable method for exploring teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. The nature of this study required qualitative methodology to examine teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Basic qualitative research was appropriate for this study because it does not have specific methodological rules (see Kennedy, 2016). A basic qualitative approach enables

conducting semistructured interviews and document analyses to research an observed phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). The semistructured interviews in the current study enabled the teachers to describe their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Focusing on teachers' perceptions aligned with Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework, which indicates that certified, experienced teachers positively impact marginalized students' academic achievement. Investigating the topic in such a manner allowed for in-depth dialogue about the teachers' perceptions.

This study consisted of data from 10 teachers in K-8 grade schools identified as high poverty within six school districts. According to the NCES (2017), a high-poverty school has 75% of students receiving free or reduced school lunch. The teacher participants worked in schools with at least 75% of students who received free or reduced lunch. After I obtained Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the organizations sent out a recruitment invitation to teachers on my behalf. The invitation email contained a description of the study and its purpose as well as a request for participation in a 30- to 45-minute interview and engagement in the member checking process.

Potential participants emailed me to express interest in taking part in the study. The potential participants received a consent form via email, to which they indicated their consent by writing, "I consent," in a reply email. After receiving the 10 participants' completed consent forms, I stopped all recruitment efforts. Next, I scheduled interviews at a time convenient for the participants via the Zoom (2021) video conferencing platform. Audio recording the participants' responses allowed me to capture the data

from the interviews. After the semistructured interviews were completed, the data analysis process consisted of descriptive coding and category construction of the participants' responses. From the qualitative analysis, themes emerged related to teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Definitions

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965: A federal education law enacted in 1965 that provided funding for schools and school districts with students in high poverty to provide educational equality for all students (Paul, 2016).

Equitable instructional practices: The ability of an educator to recognize subtle biases and inequities; respond to biases and inequities; redress biases and inequities; and create and sustain bias-free and equitable classrooms, schools, and instructional cultures (Gorski, 2016).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): A federal education law enacted in 2015 as a revision of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The law shifts accountability measures for school systems to include equitable opportunities for all students (Adler-Greene, 2019).

Income achievement gap: The measurement of performance on standardized assessments between students of different economic statuses (NCES, 2019).

NCLB: A federal education law enacted in 2015 to increase accountability measures to improve marginalized students' academic performance. The accountability measures include punitive consequences for schools if at-risk students do not meet

growth targets on the end-of-the-year state assessments after 3 consecutive years (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Socioeconomic status: The social status of a family or group is measured by education, income, and occupation (Chiu & Chow, 2015).

Assumptions

Assumptions within a qualitative study are the researcher's beliefs about a study (Patton, 2015). Thus, there was a need to examine my assumptions to ensure the validity of the results. I made several assumptions when examining teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools in this study. One assumption was that the participants provided accurate accounts of their perceptions during their semistructured interview. Forthcoming participants contribute to accurate and reliable data collection (Patton, 2015). Another assumption was that the participants were interested in studying equitable instruction practices because of the significance the practices have to their careers. Lastly, I assumed the participants' perceptions of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools were representative of most teachers.

Scope and Delimitations

The teachers who participated in this study were K–8 teachers in three school districts in Louisiana. Specifically, the focus was on teachers of students who receive free or reduced lunch, which is a primary indicator of students living in high-poverty households (see NCES, 2017). Each teacher participated in one interview. The perceptions of teachers in another geographic region could be different from those of the participants. The conceptual framework aligned with the purpose of the study to explore

teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. I used one theory as the conceptual framework; however, there could have been other appropriate theories.

Limitations

Limitations within a study are factors that could affect the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). One limitation of this study was the lack of critiques conducted with Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework. This was a study limited to educators in high-poverty schools; therefore, the findings may not apply to teachers at schools of different socioeconomic status. Although all the teachers who participated in this study taught at high-poverty schools, I was open to teachers with various experiences and backgrounds to increase the range of the participant population in the study. I conducted 10 participant interviews based on Creswell and Creswell's (2018) assertion that qualitative studies only need a few cases for saturation.

Significance

This qualitative study filled a gap in education research by focusing on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. This was a significant study because it addressed an unexamined topic in education (see Zhou et al., 2018): equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Dyches and Boyd (2017) stated that teachers must know about effective practices for classroom success. Additionally, Dyches and Boyd argued that teachers' instructional knowledge should include techniques for positioning students to act for justice. Educators could use the insights provided in the current study to reflect on their

instructional practices and develop equitable instructional practices to enhance student outcomes. School district leaders and policymakers could also use the findings to establish professional development opportunities focused on teachers' needs for implementing equitable practices. These professional development opportunities could improve teachers' use of equitable instructional practices within classrooms.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented an introduction to the study, including the background of the phenomenon. The chapter also included the study's research problem, purpose, and significance. This study focused on teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools, which was an area of education not yet examined in previous research. The chapter also included the research question developed using the equity literacy conceptual framework. I then described the basic qualitative research design used to conduct the study, which was followed by a discussion of the scope and delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on the key concepts related to equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Research has shown the benefits of equitable instructional practices for students in high-poverty schools (Andersen & Andersen, 2015; Jackson et al., 2015). Although the extant research presented the benefits of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools, the literature has not addressed teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional strategies. Therefore, this study focused on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools and the impact of those practices on teaching. The themes identified in this study could increase awareness of teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices, resulting in new knowledge within the field of education on teaching students who live in poverty.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature review strategy and an overview of the study's conceptual framework, Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory. Next, the chapter contains a review of the extant literature on the income achievement gap, including recent legislation on improving this gap; high-poverty schools; the barriers faced in high-poverty schools; and current solutions to those barriers. Finally, I discuss equitable instructional practices and their influence on high-poverty schools.

Literature Search Strategies

I used the following databases to search for relevant literature for this review: Walden Library, Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journals, Education

Source, ProQuest Central, and Taylor & Francis Online. I limited the search to peer-reviewed articles published within the last 5 years. The literature search commenced with an examination of articles on the income achievement gap, equitable classroom instruction, and solutions to equity issues in K–12 educational environments.

I searched for literature on the income achievement gap with the keywords and phrases of *equitable state policies, equitable use of funds in K-12 settings, income achievement gap, teachers' impact of student achievement, equity distribution of highly qualified teachers, opportunity gap, war on poverty, free or reduced lunch, high-poverty schools,* and *socioeconomic status AND schools*. I searched for literature on high-poverty schools with the following keywords: *school readiness of students who live in high poverty, factors influencing the performance of students who live in poverty, high-performing school in high-poverty areas, teacher preparation for high-poverty schools, equity in teacher education programs, low achievement groups in K-12 settings, predictor variables in student achievement, social justice,* and *value-added models*. While searching for research on equitable instructional practices in schools, I used the keywords: *equitable-based instructional practices, equity in elementary schools, equity theories in education, equality in elementary education, equity framework,* and *professional development of equity*. After reading the articles related to key concepts within this study, I completed a literature matrix to organize them based on alignment with key headings. I expanded the search to include seminal sources critical to exhausting the research and the study.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I used the equity literacy framework to examine the phenomenon of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework provided a foundation to define this phenomenon, identify the equitable instructional practices that teachers must use to include equity in their instruction, and examine the teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Equity Literacy Framework

According to the equity literacy framework, equity should be at the forefront of education instead of the culture-centric framework (Gorski, 2016). A commitment to equity in education for all students has resulted in several professional development programs for cultural proficiency, cultural competence, culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching, cross-cultural education, intercultural education, and multicultural education (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). However, researchers have warned that culturally focused programs do not address the social, structural, and political conditions that cause educational disparities for marginalized students (Berliner, 2013; Gorski, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Through decades of research on multicultural education and the inequities affecting marginalized students, Gorski (2016) proposed the term "equity literacy" as an extension of Banks' (2004) multicultural education framework. In this way, Gorski centered professional development efforts on equity instead of culture. Swalwell (2011) believed that the equity literacy framework is a means of keeping equity, not cultural diversity, at the forefront of conversations.

Ryoo et al. (2019) defined equity as the fair distribution of teaching and resources according to different students' needs. Hill et al. (2019) defined equity-centered teaching as educators' ability to improve marginalized students' learning while challenging and recognizing inequities. Teachers need opportunities to deepen their understanding of how race, class, and gender align with their instructional practices to ensure students have equitable instructional environments (Hill et al., 2019). A way to explore teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices is to explore their perceptions of their abilities to provide equitable-based instructional practices within their classrooms.

Teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and dispositions must align with actions that contribute to equitable instructional environments for marginalized students in high-poverty schools (Hill et al., 2019). Gorski (2014) stated that educators must become threats to inequity to serve students in low-income populations effectively. According to Gorski (2016), teachers must have proficient knowledge and skills to ensure and advocate for equity. Educators must possess foundational knowledge about the nature of inequity and how it presents within the educational environment to provide equitable instructional opportunities for students (Gorski, 2016). The equity literacy framework shows that acquiring knowledge and skills to ensure and advocate for literacy is a way to address the institutional conditions that produce manifestations of inequity. Additionally, the knowledge and skills needed to ensure and advocate for equity indicate how to educate students from marginalized groups. Utilizing equity literacy enables all students in the classroom to expand their educational opportunities (Lawson, 2015).

According to Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework, equity-literate educators recognize, immediately respond to, and redress biases and inequities; cultivate equitable ideologies and institutional cultures; and sustain bias-free and equitable classrooms. Teachers who recognize biases and inequities recognize the challenges students who live in poverty experience in and out of school (Gorski, 2016). Equity-literate teachers apply an equity lens to every practice and process decision and uphold the equitable practices put into place (Gorski, 2016). Thompson and Thompson (2018) discussed that using equitable instructional practices through the lens of Gorski's framework in classrooms could have a positive impact on students.

Theoretical Underpinning of Equity Literacy Framework

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is the theoretical basis of Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework. According to social learning theory, individuals base their actions on what they observe (Bandura, 1977). This theory resulted in the self-efficacy theory, in which the idea that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities affect their functioning was put forth (Karimova et al., 2020). Four experiences contribute to self-efficacy: vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, mastery experiences, and emotional/physiological states (Bandura, 1977). Bandura stated that possessing high self-efficacy could enable an individual to identify barriers as opportunities.

When considering equity literacy through the self-efficacy lens, educators become equity literate by believing that they can do so. Teachers must know about the internal and external factors inequitable for students in high-poverty schools. Individuals with high self-efficacy look at a task from a broad viewpoint (Infurna et al., 2018); educators

must redress inequities for students in high-poverty schools. With high self-efficacy, teachers can position themselves to implement equitable instructional practices in their classrooms. Self-efficacy has a positive effect on student outcomes (Perera & John, 2020).

Other Theories Considered

This study focused on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to provide equitable instruction within high-poverty schools. Several studies have shown the benefits of equitable classroom practices for students in high-poverty schools (Comber, 2016; Scholes et al., 2017). I used Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework as the study's theoretical framework. Gorski's framework presents the knowledge and skills that teachers need to become threats to inequities for students who live in high poverty.

Several theories address the relationship between teaching and student learning (Bowlby, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). Bowlby (1969) developed the attachment theory, which indicates that individuals organize their early childhood experiences through positive relations with adults. Smith et al. (2017) argued that positive experiences and feelings from caring adults are means of altering early life's negative attachments. Fonagy and Allison (2014, as cited in Harlow, 2019) argued that children who have trusting relationships with their caregivers could learn through their social environments. Vygotsky (1978), as a part of the sociocultural framework, described human development as a socially mediated process. Using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Dlamini and Sheik (2019) determined that instructional practices are key for learners to develop systematic thinking. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Bowlby's attachment theory

present the positive effects teachers and instructional practices have on students' success. However, the use of these theories would not have enabled me to identify the knowledge and skills teachers in high-poverty schools need to provide equitable instruction. Using Gorski's (2014) equity literacy framework enabled me to describe teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Income Achievement Gap

An achievement gap is the measurement of disparities within the educational attainment of different groups of students (Berliner, 2017). The achievement gap is an issue documented throughout history that has caused various policy changes in the United States (Coleman, 1973). Scholars have researched several achievement gaps, including those between racial and ethnic minorities (Henry et al., 2020), English speakers and English language learners (Gibson, 2016), students with and without disabilities (Mintrop & Zane, 2017), male and female students (Reardon et al., 2019), and students from affluent and high-poverty backgrounds (Whipple et al., 2016). Researchers have measured achievement gaps by performance on state and national assessments (NCES, 2019), educational attainment (Mahatmya et al., 2016), and job fulfillment (Hardcastle et al., 2018). A 2019 measurement of persistent achievement gaps indicated a 13% to 25% decrease in achievement gaps based on race and language (NCES, 2019). The racial achievement gap decreased 0.15 standard deviations in fourth grade and 0.11 standard deviations in eighth grade. Moreover, there have been decreases in English language achievement by 0.15 in fourth grade and 0.20 in eighth grade (NCES, 2019).

Despite the gains made with several achievement gaps (NCES, 2019), there remains a significant difference between the educational outcomes of students who live in poverty and those who live in affluent neighborhoods (Bellibas, 2016; Owens, 2017; Reardon & Portilla, 2016). Research on the income achievement gap indicates a significant difference in achievement between high- and low-poverty students (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016; Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017; Owens, 2017; Rogers et al., 2018; Ziol-Guest & Lee, 2016). Several studies have indicated an increasing achievement gap of as large as 40% based on the socioeconomic status of students born in the 21st century (Owens, 2017; Shing & Yuan, 2017; Ziol-Guest & Lee, 2016). However, an individual's success directly aligns with education (Zhao, 2016). Chmielewski and Reardon (2016) suggested that students who attend affluent districts gain almost a year more in proficiency on the end-of-year assessments than students who attend high-poverty school districts.

Students from low socioeconomic-status backgrounds tend to score lower than students from high SES backgrounds in language, mathematics, and science (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). Curran (2016) found an income achievement gap of 1 standard deviation between students from families of the 90th and 10th percentile of income. Furthermore, on average, fourth-grade reading scores indicate a 28-point difference between high- and low-poverty students (NCES, 2019). There is a need for more research focused on solutions to close the well-documented income achievement gap (Rogers et al., 2018).

Numerous scholars have attempted to identify the root causes of the income achievement gap (Andersen & Andersen, 2015; Caucutt et al., 2015; Engel et al., 2016; Hindman et al., 2016; Owens, 2017; Ziol-Guest & Lee, 2016). The seminal Coleman Report of 1966 provided an analysis of several factors contributing to the persistent income achievement gap. Following a study of more than 600,000 students and teachers across the United States, Coleman (1973) suggested that a student's home background was the most significant influence on academic success—more significant than the instructional environment. The Coleman Report resulted in a change in school policies, such as busing Black students to predominately White schools (Downey & Condron, 2017) and additional academic research (Alexander & Morgan, 2016). As with many studies, scholars have critiqued the Coleman Report for not addressing the transformative influence of schools on the income achievement gap (Kantor & Lowe, 2017; Micalizzi et al., 2019). Thus, there was a need for further knowledge on the achievement gap.

Factors Affecting the Income Achievement Gap

Since the Coleman Report of 1966, many scholars have focused on the factors of and policies, strategies, and suggestions for closing the income achievement gap (Calzada et al., 2015; Engel et al., 2016; Shing & Yuan, 2017). The literature provides evidence of the factors that cause disparities in academic achievement, such as high poverty, home environment (Rosen et al., 2018), the climate of high-quality expectations (Tan, 2016), school readiness (Shing & Yuan, 2017), school segregation (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016), and inequitable access to high-quality teachers (Knight, 2017). Following is a synthesis of the factors that contribute to the income achievement gap.

Home Environment Factors

A student's home environment is a predictor of academic success (Caucutt et al., 2015; Owens, 2017; Rosen et al., 2018; Shing & Yuan, 2017), impacting educational outcomes (Rosen et al., 2018). Students in low-poverty households are exposed to 30 million fewer words (Hindman et al., 2016; Shing & Yuan, 2017; Snow, 2017) and receive less investment in early childhood development (Reardon & Portilla, 2016) than students in high-income households. Dimosthenous et al. (2020) measured the home learning environment's effect on student achievement and found that at-home activities with parents correlated with Year 1 academic success. Chung et al. (2016) had similar results in examining the effects of home environmental effects on student achievement. There is conflicting evidence on the impact of the home environment on student achievement; however, there is evidence of its effect on the persistent income achievement gap (Rosen et al., 2018).

School Segregation

Students who live in high-poverty neighborhoods have lower-quality school conditions than students in low-poverty neighborhoods (Knight, 2017). This disparity is another factor contributing to the income achievement gap and income segregation between school districts (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016; Owens, 2017). There has been increased segregation by income within U.S. public school districts since the 1990s (Owens et al., 2016), suggesting a correlation between school quality and poverty. The Great Recession led to cuts of state funding for public education (Knight, 2017). Therefore, states have insufficient budgets to address barriers contributing to the income

achievement gap (Baker & Green, 2008). Because local taxes provide the most capital for public schools, schools in low-poverty areas receive less funding to address the lack of resources in students' homes (Owens, 2017). Knight (2017) found that high-poverty districts had inequitable funding compared to low-poverty districts. Consequently, income segregation among school districts may contribute to the persistent income achievement gap (Jackson et al., 2015).

Scholars have examined the effect of higher per-pupil capital spending and its relationship with student achievement (Baker & Weber, 2016). Higher per-pupil spending correlates with increased student achievement (Baker & Weber, 2016; Jackson et al., 2015). Jackson et al. (2015) utilized instrumental variable models to demonstrate that a 10% increase in per-pupil spending correlates with increased educational attainment by 0.31 years. According to Jackson et al., adequate funding for schools is necessary for improving students' educational attainment. Baker and Weber (2016) explored the heterogeneity of state investments in elementary and secondary education, finding that higher per-pupil spending positively affected students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, increased funding for high-poverty schools can result in high per-pupil spending on curricular resources, high-quality teachers, technological advancement, and social-emotional development services to combat home environments.

Quality of Schools

School quality in different socioeconomic areas is another factor that contributes to the income achievement gap (Andersen & Andersen, 2015; Bernal et al., 2016; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). There is conflicting evidence on the school characteristics that impact

student achievement (Bernal et al., 2016; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Identified characteristics include teacher quality (Durham et al., 2019; Gerritsen et al., 2016), educational resources (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2015), principal instructional leadership (Fuller et al., 2017; Litz & Scott, 2016), and high expectations from school staff (Tan, 2016). More specifically, principal instructional leadership positively correlates with improved student achievement (Fuller et al., 2017; Litz & Scott, 2016). Tan (2016) found that principal instructional leadership had the most effect on disadvantaged students, with a coefficient of 11.22 to 11.74. A focus of recent research, improving principals' instructional leadership is a way of ensuring a positive impact on student achievement. Focusing on teachers' instructional quality is another way to impact student achievement.

High-quality teachers positively impact student achievement (Lee & Bierman, 2015). However, there is a concentration of ineffective teachers in high-poverty schools (Goldhaber et al., 2015; Isenberg et al., 2015; McFarland et al., 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019). There is a positive correlation between teaching experience and increased student achievement (McFarland et al., 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019). McFarland et al. (2017) found that high-poverty schools had a much smaller percentage of certified teachers than low-poverty schools, translating into more highly trained teachers in schools with fewer low-income students. Goldhaber et al. (2015) examined the experience, licensure exam results, and value-added scores of teachers in Washington. They saw an inequitable distribution of teacher quality in each indicator for students with free or reduced lunch rates. Such findings suggested that students who attend schools in predominately low-SES neighborhoods receive instruction from teachers with quality gaps. Therefore,

placing effective teachers in high-poverty schools is a way to reduce the income achievement gap.

Recent Legislation to Address the Income Achievement Gap

The U.S. government enacted several legislative acts to ameliorate the decades-long income achievement gap (Aydin et al., 2017; Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Okhremtchouk & Jimenez-Castellanos, 2018). The NCLB, enacted in 2001, focused on the standards and specific, measurable goals of improving student achievement (Aydin et al., 2017). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, established in 2009, provided $10 billion to school districts with large populations of students living in poverty to improve classroom instruction (Okhremtchouk & Jimenez-Castellanos, 2018). The ESSA of 2015 resulted in state leaders endorsing universal learning designs to promote personalized learning for all students (Penuel et al., 2016). All three acts provided accountability measures, including end-of-year assessments, to monitor subpopulations (Garner et al., 2017). Garner et al. (2017) suggested that the legislative acts thus far have not addressed the systemic oppression of marginalized students.

The NCLB, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and ESSA have explicitly focused on marginalized students' equitable experiences. Many opponents of end-of-year accountability methods stated that assessments contribute to deficit mindsets about marginalized students, measuring success via unvalidated assessments misaligned to local curricula (Garner et al., 2017) and intensive test preparation strategies (Horn et al., 2016). The educational acts produced the demand for standardization among schools by requiring certain standards, assessments, and curricular resources (Cramer et al., 2017;

Egalite & Kisida, 2017). Cramer et al. (2017) argued that focusing on standardization does not address the complex needs of students from marginalized groups. Rather the emphasis should be on the supports and resources needed to counteract the complex barriers encountered by marginalized students.

High-Poverty Schools

Approximately 41% of children in the United States live in low-income families, and 19% are poor (Koball & Jiang, 2020); thus, 41% of children live between 100% and 199% of the federal poverty threshold—more specifically, 19% live below 100% of the federal poverty threshold. In fall 2017, 25% of all public schools were high-poverty schools (NCES, 2019). Approximately 20% of students attending public schools live in poverty (McFarland et al., 2017). Of the 716,416 total students who attend public school, 70.59% are economically disadvantaged (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019). The U.S. Department of Education (2015) defined high-poverty schools as public schools in which more than 75% of the students who attend are eligible for free or reduced lunch rates.

Despite the strides made to improve the academic achievement of students living in poverty, it has been a struggle to identify holistic resources for improving schools in high-poverty communities (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016; Evans & Popova, 2015; Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017; Owens, 2017; Rogers et al., 2018; Ziol-Guest & Lee, 2016). Consequently, there is a need to ensure the effectiveness of schools in high-poverty communities and improve academic achievement despite the barriers faced by students who live in high poverty (Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2019).

Barriers Affecting Student Achievement in High-Poverty Schools

Identifying the barriers faced by students who live in poverty is a critical step in the first ability of equity literacy (Gorski, 2016). Schools in high-poverty communities have many barriers that obstruct students' education, including absenteeism, stress, low funding, and teacher turnover and quality. This section of the literature review presents the barriers and barrier solutions at high-poverty schools and equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Absenteeism

Scholars have argued that chronic absences result in low achievement in math and literacy (Gershenson, 2016; Lee & Bierman, 2015) and that students who live in poverty are at high risk of absenteeism (Durham et al., 2019). An abundance of research on the effects of absenteeism in high-poverty schools indicates that chronic absenteeism contributes to the socioeconomic gaps in reading and math scores (Aucejo & Romano, 2016; Cook et al., 2017; Gershenson, 2016). Such research suggested that students who live in poverty are at a higher risk of absenteeism than students who live in low poverty (Cook et al., 2017).

Chronic absence occurs when a student misses 20 or more unexcused days of school (Attendance Works, 2017). Chronic absence adversely affects student achievement, particularly in high-poverty schools (Durham et al., 2019). Durham et al. (2019) examined the relationship between student attendance and community schools with full-service support. They found that staff members in high-poverty schools were more resistant to support approaches than those in more economically advantaged

contexts. Chronic absenteeism could contribute to the income achievement gap (Aucejo & Romano, 2016; Cook et al., 2017). Interventions for student absenteeism are ways to improve the academic outcomes for students living in high poverty (Cook et al., 2017).

Stress

High-poverty schools often have high rates of student exposure to stress and trauma (Blitz et al., 2016; Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). The chronic stress that students in high-poverty schools experience is the result of negative peer influences, high crime rates within high-poverty neighborhoods, and rates of parental depression due to a lack of resources (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). High-poverty students' chronic stress impacts cognitive functions, such as working memory, decision-making, and problem-solving (Cedeño et al., 2016).

Educators at many high-poverty schools find it challenging to work with students who experience trauma (Blitz et al., 2016; Perry & Daniels, 2016). Blitz et al. (2016) used an exploratory study of school climate to inform trauma-informed practices as a whole-school approach. They captured data from classroom observations, teachers' perceptions, and students' perceptions within one high-poverty elementary school of 1,200 students. Blitz et al. suggested the need for strategies to recognize and respond to students' individual and collective experiences and support the most vulnerable students to counteract barriers to student achievement in high-poverty schools.

Funding

Since the Great Recession, substantial cuts to public education have resulted in layoffs and funding reductions (Knight, 2017). The cuts have had a significant effect on

high-poverty school districts that require federal and state funding for the purchase of resources (Goldhaber et al., 2016). Semuels (2016) found that, on average, there is 15.6% more money spent on students in wealthy districts. Higher funding for high-poverty schools has positive effects on student achievement (Jackson et al., 2015). Knight (2017) found inequitable funding between high- and low-poverty schools in many school districts. In addition, Kainz (2019) analyzed approximately 20,000 kindergarten students to determine the greatest use of Title I funds. Kainz found significant gains in English language arts with Title I funds used to support small classroom sizes; greater use of Title I funds used for teachers' professional development produced more significant benefits in mathematics. Such findings provided insight into which measures contribute to closing the income achievement gap. Increased funding for high-poverty schools can result in increased per-pupil spending for curricular resources, high-quality teachers, technological advancement, and social-emotional development services to address students' home environments.

Teacher Turnover

Effective teachers are central contributors to student achievement (Lee & Bierman, 2015; Quinlan et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2019). Despite this fact, high-poverty schools have higher teacher turnover rates than low-poverty schools (Goldhaber et al., 2015; Hirn et al., 2017; Lee & Bierman, 2015). The NCES (2019) found that teachers in high-poverty schools leave at a 50% higher rate than teachers in low-poverty schools. Reasons for the high departure rates included the lack of training on addressing the barriers in high-poverty schools (Aydin et al., 2017), administrative support (Olsen &

Huang, 2019), and resources to address diverse student learning (Carnoy et al., 2015). Thus, teacher turnover in high-poverty schools is another contributing factor to the income achievement gap. However, Carnoy et al. (2015) did not address the effectiveness of teachers who leave high-poverty schools. Swain et al. (2019) examined the effects of retaining highly effective teachers and found greater student gains in subsequent years.

There is a positive correlation between teaching experience and student achievement (Podolsky et al., 2019). McFarland et al. (2017) found a significantly lower percentage of certified teachers in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools, which suggests highly trained educators teach in schools with fewer low-income students. McFarland et al. also stated that stable and experienced teaching staff members are more likely to improve student achievement. Goldhaber et al. (2015) examined Washington teachers' years of experience, licensure exam results, and value-added scores and found an inequitable distribution of teacher quality in each indicator for students with free or reduced lunch rates. Such a finding indicated that the students from predominately low-socioeconomic backgrounds received instruction from teachers with quality gaps.

Recent Solutions of Barriers High-Poverty Schools Face

Crawford et al. (2016) examined the trajectories of students from low- and high-SES backgrounds. The findings showed that, by middle school, high-achieving students from low-SES backgrounds fall behind low-achieving students from high-SES backgrounds. Crawford et al. also suggested that schools have a critical impact on the performance and explanation of the income achievement gap over time. Recent policies and research have proposed various strategies to counteract the barriers in schools in

high-poverty neighborhoods (Aydin et al., 2017; Cannon et al., 2017; Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2017; Huizen & Plantenga, 2018; Stosich, 2016). Many of these studies provided insight into successful ways to improve student achievement in high-poverty schools, such as by approaching learning from a holistic approach (Cannon et al., 2017; Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).

Several scholars have focused on the interventions found successful within high-poverty schools (Cannon et al., 2017; Cook et al., 2017). Programs such as the Early Truancy Prevention Program (ETTP) and Full Community Schools are proven means of decreasing the percentage of chronic absences among the students who attend schools in high-poverty neighborhoods (Cook et al., 2017; Durham et al., 2019). Cook et al. (2017) measured the effectiveness of ETTP on students' absences in 41 primary classrooms in high-poverty schools and found that ETTP implementation resulted in a 10% reduction of chronic absences, as well as improved parent-teacher communication. Similarly, Durham et al. (2019) examined the relationship between Full Community Schools and student attendance in high-poverty Baltimore City Public Schools. The researchers found a positive correlation between attendance strategies and attendance. Durham et al. noted more resistance to absenteeism strategies at high-poverty schools than low-poverty schools. Ultimately, absenteeism solution strategies are as diverse as the high-poverty schools they address (Bartanen, 2020; Cook et al., 2017; Durham et al., 2019).

García and Weiss (2017) found that high-poverty kindergarten students had entry scores in English and math 1 standard deviation below students from affluent households. However, research shows that early childhood programs are means of increasing the

educational attainment of students in high-poverty areas (Cannon et al., 2017; Reynolds et al., 2019; Yoshikawa et al., 2018). There have been federal policies enacted to increase the federal money allocated for early childhood programs for students in high-poverty areas (Bassok et al., 2016); however, early childhood programs vary in coordination and quality (Black et al., 2017; Huizen & Plantenga, 2018). Huizen and Plantenga (2018) examined the effects of universal early childhood using 250 estimates from 30 studies between 2007 and 2017 that had mixed evidence of the effects of early childhood programs and child development. The researchers found that a program's quality was the largest positive academic outcomes indicator.

Equitable Based Practices Within Instruction

Recent legislation includes measures to improve equitable school practices for schools in high-poverty areas. The Race to the Top, NCLB, and ESSA contributed to the demand for standardization, including common standards, assessments, and curricular resources (Cramer et al., 2017; Egalite & Kisida, 2017). Cramer et al. (2017) argued that concentrating on standardization does not address the complex needs of students from marginalized groups. Instead, they suggested focusing on the supports and resources needed to counteract the complex barriers experienced by marginalized students. Garner et al. (2017) stated that the legislative acts do not address the systemic oppression of marginalized students; however, the acts have explicitly focused on the equitable experiences of marginalized students.

Different learning opportunities within various educational systems have provided assistance with the inequality and inequities faced by students in high-poverty areas

(Andersen & Andersen, 2015; Lee et al., 2018). More specifically, there are learning opportunities and strategies based on students' socioeconomic backgrounds (Andersen & Andersen, 2015). Equity within instruction has multifaceted definitions (Chu, 2019). Brenner et al. (2016) defined equity as a teacher becoming a change agent within the classroom. Equitable learning environments are schools or classrooms where students' backgrounds do not affect their performance (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). Despite the different definitions of equity, each requires a teacher to have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to teach diverse group populations (Lee et al., 2018). Ryoo et al. (2019) asserted that individuals with equity must challenge the systemic inequities in schools.

Equitable instructional practices can contribute to the achievement of students living in high poverty. According to Andrews et al. (2017), equity within classrooms requires teachers to promote equity through critical inquiry and research. Educators can achieve equity by realizing their roles and identities as researchers and activists (Andrews et al., 2017). Rea and Zinskie (2017) defined equitable instructional practices as meeting the need for a culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student population. Ryoo et al. (2019) stated that historically underrepresented students should receive instruction that includes rigorous content knowledge, high learning expectations, and classroom environments respectful of their identities, cultural assets, and cognitive skills. Ryoo et al. also determined that teachers must understand how students understand the relationship between school and home lives.

Tan and Thorius (2018) utilized an interpretive approach to analyze data and found that identity and power tensions within teacher practices did not contribute to equitable practices. Lee et al. (2018) explored 69 teachers' use of equitable instructional practices in the United States and South Korea. They found that teachers in the United States viewed equitable instructional practices as a moral obligation; in contrast, teachers in South Korea perceived equitable instructional strategies as a standard of excellence for students.

The use of equitable based instructional practices within high-poverty schools has positive effects on student achievement (Lee et al., 2018; Wager, 2014). Hwang et al. (2018) examined the relationship between equitable instructional practices, such as student-centered instruction, socioeconomic status, and scientific or mathematic literacy. The researchers used a linear regression analysis from PISA 2012 and PISA 2015, finding that student-centered instruction was a way to narrow or maintain the gap between students of different SES. Hwang et al. suggested further examination of how teachers implement equitable instructional practices in their classrooms.

Grudnoff et al. (2015) utilized a qualitative research approach to investigate the extent to which student teachers perceived equity was at the forefront of the program. The findings showed the student teachers felt their programs prepared them to teach with a focus on equity in high-poverty areas. In Kavanagh and Danielson's (2019) video analysis of K–6 novice teachers' classroom instruction, novice teachers rarely identified the instructional decisions that addressed the barriers students encountered in high-poverty households. Charalambous et al. (2018) suggested conducting further research on

the correlations between quality and equity in education and the school and teacher factors that reduce the impact of socioeconomic background on student achievement. Further investigation into equitable instructional practices could provide policymakers and researchers with feasible targets on quality and equitable school practices (Charalambous et al., 2018) and additional knowledge on the income achievement gap (Whipple et al., 2016). Hirn et al. (2017) noted a lack of analyses of teaching practices within instruction. Thus, there is an urgent need to foster teachers' instructional quality, especially in settings where high poverty affects school quality.

Summary

This literature review provided insights into current scholarship and recommendations for further research on improving equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Scholars have suggested the need for in-depth examination to contribute to the body of knowledge, highlighting the need to examine teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. Gorski's (2016) equity literary theory was an appropriate approach to frame the literature review. There is limited research from teachers' perspectives with the lens of the equity literacy framework. Despite several studies on equitable-based instruction benefits, the researchers did not address equitable instructional practices through teachers' perspectives.

The reviewed literature provided the rationale for examining teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices using a basic qualitative study. I grounded this study in the literature to provide insight into the phenomenon from the perspectives of teachers

in high-poverty schools. The next chapter presents the study's research design, rationale, research question, methodology, and trustworthiness issues.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. I used qualitative coding methods to identify themes and findings from the participants' semistructured interview responses to answer the guiding research question. This chapter includes a discussion of the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology and design of the study, and the trustworthiness issues that can occur when conducting research.

Research Design and Rationale

Scholars have conducted qualitative studies in many fields, including psychology, nursing, education, and economics (Patton, 2015). There are several qualitative research designs, such as case studies, ethnology, evaluation research, grounded theory, narrative, phenomenology, and photo-voice/visual research (Bamberger et al., 2012; Duneier et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Smith et al., 2013; Yin, 2016). I based this study on Patton's (2015) epistemology of constructivism and used a basic qualitative approach by conducting participant interviews. With the present study, I attempted to understand teachers' perceptions of their abilities to provide equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools; therefore, basic qualitative research was the ideal method for examining this phenomenon.

The participant is the primary data source explored within a basic qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research requires narrative data collection in the most naturalistic settings possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch

& Carl, 2016), which allows a researcher to inquire about participants' life experiences. Qualitative researchers can reveal new insights into the studied phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A basic qualitative research design is appropriate for uncovering the meaning participants ascribe to an experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I conducted semistructured interviews with the teacher participants to explore their perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) provided guidelines for limiting the number of nonessential visitors at school sites. I conducted interviews via the Zoom video-conferencing platform due to social distancing guidelines. The interview transcripts were analyzed to identify themes and patterns and build concepts and theories.

The conceptual framework and literature review for this study were the means of grounding the following research question: How do teachers in high-poverty schools perceive and describe their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices?

I considered grounded theory as the research design for this study, which is a suitable qualitative approach for developing a theory (see Patton, 2015). However, I rejected this design due to the theories on previously developed equitable instructional practices. Grounded theory was not the most suitable approach for this study because I did not use participant interviews to develop a new theory (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). Scholars use the narrative design to study a small population of individuals' lives (Yin, 2018). Narrative research misaligned with the examination of teachers' perceptions of their abilities because I did not conduct the study to describe teachers' lives. The basic

qualitative design was appropriate to conduct in-depth interviews to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices and what they perceived to be the factors that obstruct or enable equitable instructional practices within their classrooms.

Role of the Researcher

Reflexivity is a critical component of a study's reliability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reflexivity addresses systematic knowledge construction to ensure that researchers limit their perceptions of the survey (Patton, 2015). As the researcher, I understood that the experts of equitable instructional strategies were the participating teachers; therefore, I needed to acknowledge my biases and perceptions. I addressed reflexivity by ensuring that the data collected accurately represented the participants' descriptions. Qualitative research tends to be subjective, and reflexivity is a means to limit bias within a study (Patton, 2015). Member checking is a validity strategy in which participants review the raw data to verify accuracy (Saldaña, 2016). I engaged the participants in member checking to ensure the accuracy of the data collected in the interviews.

I am an educational specialist for an educational company in the southern United States. My job includes supporting teaching and learning through providing coaching and professional development for school leaders and teachers. I implement effective school plans to foster a focus on instruction. My background working with high-poverty schools enabled me to decode the language teachers used during the interviews. All the participants knew of my professional role when I began the interviews. I used transparency to detach my personal beliefs from the study and conduct the research

ethically. Although the participants and I worked in the same field, we were in different districts, and I had no interactions with any of the participants before the study. I followed Walden University's ethical guidelines, obtained IRB approval (Approval No. 01-07-21-0760204), and utilized a peer reviewer to prevent subjectivity.

Methodology

Qualitative researchers attempt to describe phenomena through narrative measurements by determining what a phenomenon within everyday life means to people (Yin, 2018). I used a basic qualitative design to understand the participants' perceptions about the problem or phenomena (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this section, I describe the participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis methods for the study. The goal of the study was to collect in-depth data from the participants through interviews.

Participant Selection Logic

This study's population was a subgroup of K–8 teachers who taught various subjects in Louisiana between August 2020 and January 2021 at a 6 school districts with an approximate enrollment of 14,370 students. The school district consisted of 31 schools, and students at 89% of the schools qualified for free or reduced lunch rates (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019). The student population included 99.3% Black and 0.6% Hispanic students. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argued for limiting participant selection to a few, most-aligned cases within qualitative research. I purposefully selected teachers in line with specified inclusion criteria to ensure the participants' relevance to the study. The participants taught kindergarten through eighth

grade at high-poverty schools, which aligned with the research study and purpose (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2017).

The participants had different levels of teaching experience, which provided varying perceptions for categorization. Purposeful sampling enables in-depth examination of the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2015). I sent the recruitment invitation (see Appendix) only to teachers who fit the study criteria. Determining the sample size entails considering the research questions and study purpose (Merriam & Tisdell 2016; Patton, 2015). The sample size of 10 participants aligned with most qualitative research, which has between six and 12 participants (see Malterud et al., 2016). Saunders et al. (2018) suggested using data saturation to determine the appropriate sample size. Saturation occurred at 10 participants when no new information emerged during the data analysis.

After I received Walden University IRB approval, an authority from the participating organization distributed the recruitment invitation on my behalf via the participants' organizational email. This recruitment invitation contained a description of the study's purpose and participant requirements. Ten teachers emailed me to express their interest in participating and subsequently received a consent form to review and approve. All 10 participants responded to the email with "I consent." I stopped recruitment once saturation occurred (see Saunders et al., 2018)

Instrumentation

Qualitative methods are means of making knowledge-generating contributions (Patton, 2015). These methods can be used to illuminate meaning, study how things

work, capture stories to understand people's perspectives and experiences, elucidate how systems function and theorize consequences for people's lives, understand context, identify unanticipated consequences, and make case comparisons to discover patterns and themes across cases.

The interview guide (see Appendix B) directed data collection. An interview guide is the primary means of data collection in qualitative research and includes the interview questions and protocols to elicit responses for a study (Lewis, 2015; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2016). An interview guide enables a researcher to take a systematic approach to the interview and focus on the designed purpose (Mcgrath et al., 2018).

An interview guide contributes to the comprehensiveness of data collection (Patton, 2015) and aligns with the study's purpose. I used the literature review, research question, and conceptual framework to create interview questions. Developing the interview guide consisted of (a) reviewing the literature of the phenomenon, (b) reviewing the study's conceptual framework, (c) reviewing the methodological sources for a basic qualitative approach, (d) arranging concepts from literature and conceptual framework into chronological order, (e) developing questions for each concept, (f) developing follow-up questions, (g) developing an introduction and closing, and (h) receiving feedback from various sources.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. I used Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory as the conceptual framework due to its alignment with the research question. Integrating Gorski's five abilities of equitable

educators into the semistructured interview questions enabled me to capture teachers' perceptions of equitable instructional practices. In answering the questions, teachers provided insight into the skills and dispositions they need to promote equitable instructional environments.

Developing interview questions using a semistructured approach is a way to maintain consistent queries while encouraging the participants to answer with vivid detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). An advanced qualitative research professor, my dissertation committee members, and three experts working in high-poverty school districts provided feedback on the alignment, structure, and format of the interview guide. Their feedback contributed to the alignment between the interview questions and the main research question. In the first round of feedback, the advanced qualitative research professor determined that the interview guide addressed equity concepts in practice, poverty barriers, and poverty conditions in schools. The professor suggested adding a question to explicitly address the research question. After receiving this feedback, I added the question, "How do you perceive your ability to implement equitable instructional practices in your classroom?" During the proposal review, my committee members determined that the questions aligned with the research questions.

After the committee review, I shared the interview guide with three content experts and received recommendations for improving the format, quality, and alignment. The experts were district-level employees who implemented equitable instructional practices in their school districts' curriculum and instructed leaders in three high-poverty school districts. All the content experts recommended that more probing questions would

capture in-depth data from the participants. One expert suggested interviewing teachers who could not define equitable instructional practices and dividing Question 1 into two separate questions. I used this recommendation to develop follow-up questions for additional data if any participant could not define equitable practices. Initially, the question was to define equitable instructional practices. After revision, the question was, "What does equity in education mean for students in poverty? What are the ways that teachers attempt to address inequities within instruction?" Another recommendation was to modify Question 6, which initially was, "How do you perceive your ability to implement equitable instructional practices in your classrooms?" An expert suggested revising that question for more in-depth participant responses; thus, I changed the wording to: "Discuss how prepared you are to implement equitable instructional practices and the reason(s) for your preparedness or lack thereof." After the experts' recommendations, I revised the interview guide to include probing questions and reevaluated the interview questions to ensure alignment with the study's purpose.

I explored the participants' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices through open-ended interview questions. Open-ended questions provide opportunities for participants to answer freely (Creswell & Clark, 2018). I conducted semistructured interviews because they allow for exploring participants' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (see DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semistructured interviews enabled me to gather teachers' perceptions and experiences of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools and identify common themes.

Section 1 of the interview guide addressed teachers' definitions of equitable instructional strategies. This question aligned with the overarching research question and literature review, which focused on the strategies that school, district, and state-level leaders use to minimize the income achievement gap (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016; Engel et al., 2016; Knight, 2017; Rosen et al., 2018; Shing & Yuan, 2017). The second set of interview questions addressed the literature on the barriers that high-poverty students face (Evans & Popova, 2015; Lee et al., 2018; Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017; Owens, 2017; Reardon & Portilla, 2016; Rogers et al., 2018; Ziol-Guest & Lee, 2016). The final set of questions centered around teachers' abilities to implement equitable instructional practices through the equity literacy theory (Gorski, 2016).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval, I contacted individuals with authority to distribute the recruitment invitation on my behalf. A contact person from each district invited teachers to participate in the survey through an email that presented the study's purpose, details, a request for a 30- to 45-minute interview, and the member checking process. When I received emails from interested individuals, I responded with the consent form for their review and acceptance. After receiving 10 replies of "I consent," I stopped all recruitment efforts. Next, I scheduled Zoom interviews with the participants at times convenient to them.

Before beginning each interview, I explained the study's purpose, gave an overview of the interview questions, and answered any questions. I digitally recorded each interview using the Zoom audio-conferencing platform. During the interviews, I

took anecdotal notes to monitor the participants' gestures and facial expressions (see Patton, 2015). After completing the interviews, I scheduled follow-up interviews with the participants to discuss their reflections and answer any follow-up questions. I transcribed the recordings using the Zoom audio-conferencing platform and sent the participants copies of the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is a critical part of providing descriptive accounts of the findings in a basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). Qualitative data analysis is a structured process with data used to identify themes and construct findings based on the themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2018). Ravitch and Carl (2016) recommended qualitative techniques for data organization and management and immersive engagement with data, writing, and representation. I used a three-pronged approach to data analysis: transcribing recorded interviews, coding the transcripts, and forming categories and themes (see Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis commenced with the development of the data management plan.

Researchers must create data management plans before beginning studies (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I created a data management plan to ensure that the collected data supported the data analysis process. The data collection process occurred over 1 week. During this time, I interviewed 10 participants for 30 to 45 minutes each using the interview guide (see Appendix B) to guide the process. During the interviews, I took analytical memos to identify any potential themes that might emerge from analyzing the data. Interview transcripts are a means to maintain the fidelity of the data (Ravitch &

Carl, 2016). After transcribing the interviews using Zoom, I reviewed the transcripts to ensure accurate representations of the participants' responses. After each interview, I saved the Zoom transcription on a password-protected computer. I prepared the data for coding by comparing the audio recordings to the transcriptions. During this time, I replaced all of the participants' identifying information with pseudonyms and checked the transcripts for accuracy.

Before coding the data, researchers can precode to become familiar with the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I precoded immediately after reviewing the transcripts for accuracy, immersing myself in the data, and using analytical memos to identify key ideas after each reading. An analytical memo is a way to reflect during the data analysis process to challenge assumptions (Patton, 2015). I analyzed the transcript summaries after reading them several times, using precoding to identify and classify potential codes. The first pass was the unstructured reading, in which I engaged in the entire data set (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016) for a sense of the data and to narrow the focus of the data set. The codes identified during the precoding process were equitable instruction, background, poverty barriers, collective efforts, equitable instruction definition, equity, experience, instructional materials, knowledge, poverty, and practices.

Each coding round has a different purpose (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The next step in the data analysis process consists of several rounds of coding and vetting themes. After precoding, I coded the data with NVivo (QSR, 2021), a computer-assisted software program, to analyze the interview transcripts. Coding is the process of organizing and dissecting data into segments (Yin, 2016) with an inductive or deductive approach

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The nature of this study required an inductive approach through emergent coding. An inductive approach to coding allows the data set to drive code creation (Saldaña, 2016) for reliable results. In the first round of data analysis, I completed the emergent coding with a line-by-line coding approach to identify initial codes in each data set. The second round of coding was an accuracy check of the initial coding. I conducted several cycles of Round 1 and 2 coding to merge the original set of 47 codes into 11 categories. Next, I used the patterns that emerged from the first and second coding in the third round to identify themes (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Member checking commenced to maintain the participants' perspectives (see Birt et al., 2016) and the findings' credibility after coding. I emailed the participants the initial research findings to verify that I had accurately captured their perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in their schools. In addition to member checking, I increased the analysis's accuracy by debriefing with my dissertation chair and educational colleagues. When there were no codes shared among most participants, I determined if the data provided an insight not explored within the studied phenomenon. I used the literature and conceptual framework to determine if the data aligned with the research question and, if so, included the data in the analysis. If the discrepant data did not provide additional insights or were not useful to develop a category or theme, I discarded them. Saturation occurred when no new significant themes emerged from the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a researcher's ability to conduct a study credibly and ethically (Yin, 2016) by addressing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Thorne, 2016). Ensuring the trustworthiness of a study requires using specific strategies. The following sections present the criteria and strategies used to ensure the study's trustworthiness.

Credibility

Drawing data from sources affects the credibility of a study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). There were several strategies used to establish credibility in this study. I immersed myself within the data, as outlined in the discussion of the data analysis process and coding techniques. Allowing participants to check for the accuracy of their interpretations is another means of achieving credibility. I conducted member checking to ensure that I accurately captured the perceptions of the teachers interviewed. No participants disagreed with my interpretation.

Transferability

Transferability is whether one can apply the results of a study to a different context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Shenton, 2004); this is a component difficult to achieve in qualitative studies. High-poverty schools are unique environments with characteristics that differ from other contexts. In addition, the participant pool was 10 teachers. I boosted transferability by presenting vivid accounts of data collection and coding (see Shenton, 2004) to ensure the accurate reflection of other contexts and implications.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability are indicators of validity within research (Yin, 2018). I ensured dependability and confirmability by fully explaining the interviews to the participants to improve the study (see Shenton, 2004) and increase the potential for consistent findings (see Baxter & Jack, 2008). I also described every step of the study, including the research design, implementation, operational detail, and reflection, to improve the likelihood that other scholars replicating the study would obtain similar results (see Shenton, 2004). Other means of achieving dependability included member checking, verbatim scripting from audio recordings, reflective journaling, and multiple reading and coding. I followed Walden University's IRB research protocols.

Confirmability is the assurance that the findings present the participants' perceptions and not the researcher's (Proctor, 2017). Several strategies occurred to increase the validity of the study through confirmability. I examined the biases that I brought into the study and conducted bracketing in a reflective journal to record recognized biases when conducting the study.

Ethical Procedures

All researchers must adhere to the Code of Ethics from the American Educational Research Association (2019). I took several steps to ensure ethical procedures. First, I did not begin the study until receiving IRB approval. Next, an organization professional sent out recruitment invitations on my behalf. From there, the interested teachers emailed me to express their interest in the study. I then sent consent forms to the potential participants with the study's purpose, potential risks, confidentiality, and interview process. I ensured

that participants understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time; if any had done so, I would have selected new participants. Participants emailed back “I consent” to indicate their agreement to proceed. I scheduled the interviews after I received this information.

I maintained confidentiality by not communicating any of the participants’ identifying information to employers, organizations, or publications. I stored all transcripts and audio files on password-protected qualitative data analysis software, Zoom, and a password-protected external drive locked in my office. When writing the findings, I removed all identifying information, such as participant and school names. Furthermore, I did not conduct this study within my work environment. Although I work in the same field as the participants, I selected school districts other than my employer. I had no influence or authority over the participants.

Summary

The chapter presented the methodology used to conduct this study. It showed the rationale for conducting a basic qualitative study to explore teachers’ perceptions of equitable instructional strategies in high-poverty schools. I also included participant selection logic, instrumentation, recruitment, participation, and data collection procedures. In addition, I discussed the means of achieving trustworthiness and maintaining ethical procedures. In Chapter 4, I present the data collection characteristics, data analysis procedures, and the summary of findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Ten K–8 teachers took part in semistructured interviews to discuss their experiences with using equitable instructional practices in their classrooms. The research question that guided this study was: How do teachers perceive their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools?

In this chapter, I present an overview of the nature of this qualitative study, including its setting and the participant demographics. The chapter also includes an explanation of the data collection and analysis processes used in this study. Following a section on the evidence of trustworthiness, Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of the results and a summary of the findings.

Setting

In this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 10 K–8 teachers from high-poverty schools in Louisiana. The schools at which the participants taught had a free or reduced lunch rate average of 92.12% (Louisiana Believes, 2020). Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes and occurred via Zoom. No personal or organizational conditions influenced the participants' experiences at the time of this study. In addition, I kept a log of the data collection.

Demographics

The participants for this study were 10 K–8 teachers from 10 public schools within six school districts. All participants worked at high-poverty schools during the

2020–2021 school year. I conducted the interviews via Zoom and designated an alphanumeric identifier for each participant (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). There was one male participant and nine female participants. I further protected the participants' identities by not capturing unnecessary demographic data.

Data Collection

In this section, I present the data collection process, including the number of participants; type of data collected; location, frequency, and duration of data collection; and the means of recording the data. The interviews with the 10 participants occurred between January 7, 2021, and January 13, 2021. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, with an average of 40 minutes. I was the only researcher and received informed consent from each participant before each interview. At the beginning of each interview, I stated the purpose and described the informed consent and confidentiality procedures being used. Next, the participants answered the interview questions (see Appendix B), and I asked probing questions as appropriate. I concluded the interviews by thanking the participants and asking their permission to conduct follow-up interviews if necessary; however, no follow-ups were necessary. I also asked the participants to take part in member checking to verify my interpretations of their perceptions. Table 1 shows the data collection log.

Table 1

Data Collection Log

Participant ID	Interview date and time
Participant 1	1/7/2021 4:30 p.m.
Participant 2	1/8/2021 12:30 p.m.
Participant 3	1/8/2021 3:30 p.m.
Participant 4	1/8/2021 7:00 p.m.
Participant 5	1/8/2021 8:00 p.m.
Participant 6	1/9/2021 10:00 a.m.
Participant **7**	1/9/2021 2:30 p.m.
Participant 8	1/10/2021 4: 30 p.m.
Participant 9	1/12/2021 4:00 p.m.
Participant 10	1/13/2021 3:30 p.m.

I used Zoom to audio record all interviews, downloading and storing the audio recordings on a password-protected computer. I did not script the responses during the interviews to avoid distracting the participants and remain attentive. However, during the interviews, I took field notes for details and keywords for the data analysis process. The Zoom platform also transcribed each interview. The participants received draft copies of my interpretations of their perceptions within a week of the interviews to increase the validity of the findings. There were no variations in the data collection plan presented in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

I conducted all 10 semistructured interviews over 1 week in January 2021 using the interview guide (see Appendix B). The responses from each interview underwent coding before another interview commenced so I could focus and reflect on each data set.

I protected the confidentiality of all the participants by assigning numbers to each data set.

After producing the interview transcripts via the Zoom platform, I compared the audio files to the transcripts to check for accuracy. I then uploaded the data sets to the NVivo software to prepare for data analysis. After checking each data set for accuracy, I began the precoding process, in which I read the transcripts several times to immerse myself in and become familiarized with the data. I noted general impressions to identify possible codes, such as background, barriers of poverty, equity, collective efforts, environment, the definition of equitable instruction, instructional materials, poverty, practices, and experience.

After several reads, I began the coding process by using emergent coding during the first round to identify descriptive codes. Line-by-line coding was the process used for descriptive coding. Saldaña (2016) suggested the use of a codebook during data analysis to document codes and categories. During the initial data set analysis, 209 codes emerged. Saturation occurred after a review of the coding for Participant 10's interview responses indicated no new codes.

The second round of coding consisted of identifying patterns. During this process, I wrote another set of analytical memos to capture possible connections between the first and second round of coding. The second round of coding enabled me to delve deeper into the data set. Coding was an iterative process, as I conducted the first and second rounds several times. After completing several rounds of coding with each data set, I merged and reduced the number of codes by identifying redundancy. There was a final total of 47

codes. I identified categories across the data set from the open coding and the conceptual framework and merged the 47 codes into 11 categories by merging relevant similarities. Table 2 presents the 11 categories identified during Round 2 of data analysis.

Table 2

Data Analysis Categories

Category	Participants contributing to category (N = 10)
Misalignment of teacher beliefs and policies	7
Student identity lost in organization's policies	8
Knowledge of students	7
Relationship building	5
Life experience	4
Preparation	7
Teaching experience	4
Professional development	5
Purpose of equitable instructional practices	9
Commitment	9

In the third round of coding, I examined the patterns through the lens of the conceptual framework. I maintained a reflective journal to document the developing patterns and themes, merging the 11 categories into three themes. This process entailed creating a parent code and aligning all the pattern codes into a child code in NVivo. Table 3 presents the number of data references within the three themes.

Table 3

Data Analysis: Number of References Included in Themes

Theme	Number of participants who supported the theme	Number of references in the data set to the theme
Theme 1: Identity crisis	10	91
Theme 2: Experience	8	57
Theme 3: Principles	10	69

After the participant members checked the documents for accuracy, I engaged in a peer review process with several colleagues to discuss my interpretation of the data. The peer-review process was conducted with colleagues who are leading instructional programs in high-poverty schools. Their objective feedback enabled me to examine possible researcher bias during the data analysis process. The peers asked me reflective questions to help condense the emergent themes. For example, several peers suggested that student identities and teacher identities should be merged into one theme. I received feedback on the development of the emergent themes and their alignment to the study. This peer-review process contributed to the credibility of the results.

Word Cloud

Analysis of the data sets to identify common themes showed that the participants used 50 common words to describe their perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instruction practices in their classrooms. I generated Figure 1 using Zoom software and a data set of participant responses with five or more letters. The most frequent words that teachers used were knowledge, believes, and barriers. Several coding rounds indicated that the teachers expressed a strong belief that developing an in-depth knowledge of students was a critical part of providing equitable instructional practices.

Throughout the data set, the participants shared having an espoused belief when defining their roles in students' lives and the purpose of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. All the participants also identified their perceptions of barriers experienced by students who live in poverty. Other prominent terms within this word cloud and the themes identified within the data set were community, equitable, poverty, prepared, classroom, knowledge, and relate.

Figure 1

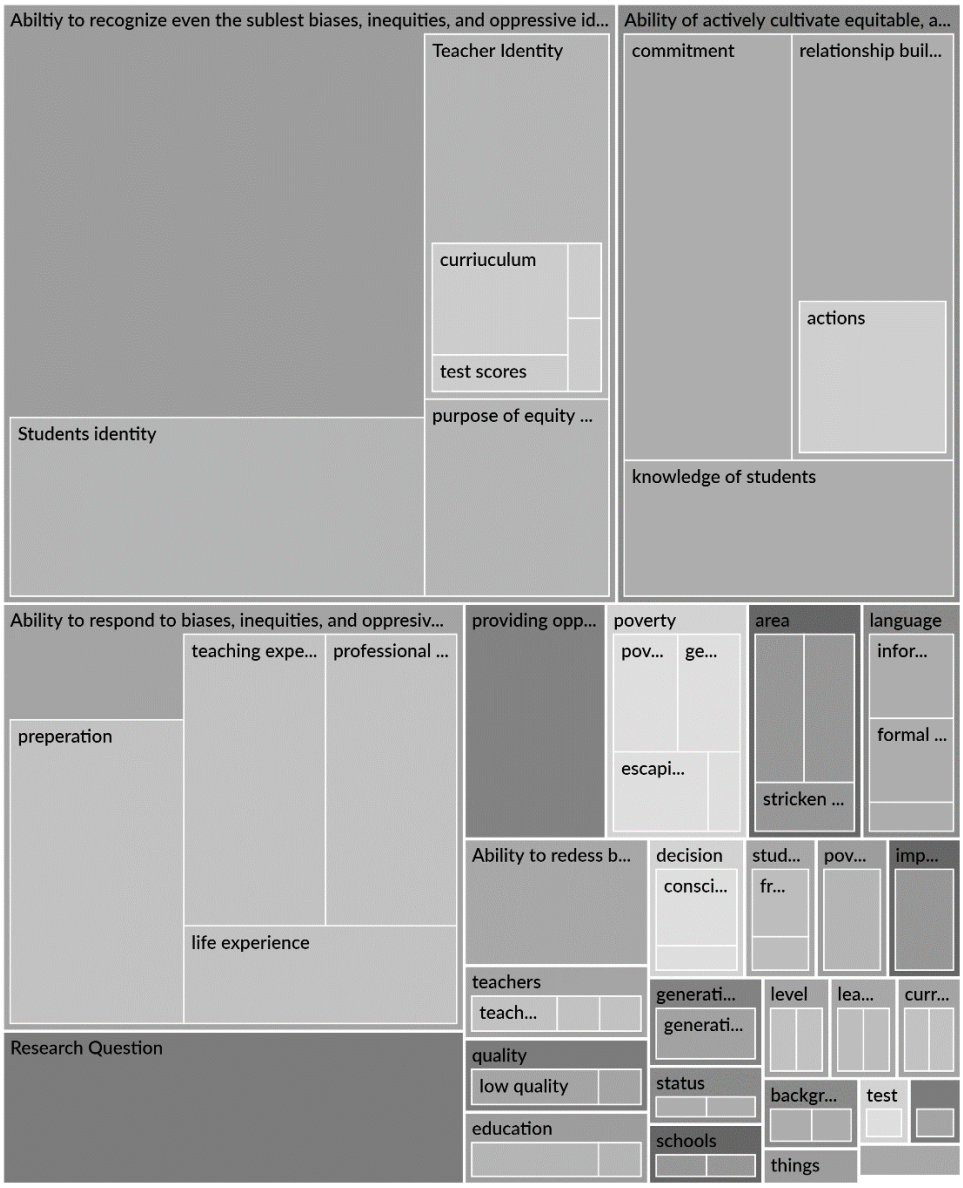
Zoom Word Cloud

Hierarchy of Codes Related to Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 shows the hierarchy of and alignment between the codes, patterns, and themes to the conceptual framework. There were three overarching concepts within the conceptual framework in the data set. The ability to recognize even the subtlest biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies was a component coded and referenced 91 times during the data set analysis. The ability to actively cultivate equitable, antioppressive ideologies and institutional cultures was referenced 38 times during the data set analysis. The ability to respond to biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in the immediate term was a component coded and referenced 29 times during the data set analysis.

Figure 2

Zoom Hierarchy Chart of Intersecting Codes



Cycle 1 Coding Summaries

Participant 1

Participant 1 noted that student perceptions are barriers to academic performance. Participant 1's interview produced 16 codes with 34 references. This teacher expressed the need to ensure that barriers due to poverty do not affect students in school. Participant 1 stated that some students felt like "there [was] no hope" for their education. The participants described that students could have negative self-perceptions of their learning abilities because of school experiences. When looking for role models at home, students might report, "I do not feel like I can get somewhere. I just feel like it will be the same thing." Participant 1 expressed that teachers may have negatively impacted students' perceptions of education. For example, the teacher stated, "Students in high-poverty areas might have had teachers [who] destroyed their perception[s] of education, teachers [who] did not go the extra mile, teachers [who] did not care." According to Participant 1, teachers should ensure that barriers do not affect students within the school environment by going "above and beyond" to remove obstacles and give students a "fair shot."

Participant 1 described the ways she implemented equitable instruction in her classroom. However, when discussing the barriers specific to her students, she expressed her colleagues' collective efforts. Students at her school struggled with virtual learning and being caregivers for their younger siblings during the school day. The team she worked with provided flexible school hours to counteract this challenge. She felt that the team's collective efforts to minimize poverty barriers affected student outcomes within her school. Participant 1referred to her team as "problem-solvers." She noted wanting to

receive professional support by “branching out” to enhance her knowledge and skills to counteract students’ barriers.

Participant 2

Participant 2’s interview produced nine codes with 16 references. Participant 2 defined equity for high-poverty students as “students having access to quality education and students being able to be a part of something where they are given an opportunity to learn.” She expressed that teachers felt uncomfortable reaching out to leaders for support with overcoming challenges. The participants identified the barriers that high-poverty students live in as a “generational curse” because the family members do not break generation gaps due to self-perceptions. Participant 2 expressed the need for teachers to have visions for students from high-poverty backgrounds by teaching through the lens of “why.” The teacher detailed “creative ways” to meet the learning needs of the students in her class using skills she had developed through self-exploration and experience. Participant 2 believed that she had limited autonomy to provide equitable instruction. However, she received support for instructional best practices from her leadership team and took the initiative to research the best practices to counteract barriers for students. Participant 2 identified the need for support from the administration “that is not punitive.”

Participant 3

Participant 3’s interview produced 32 codes with 82 references. Participant 3 defined equity in education as students having access to individualized resources. She stated that equity in education means educators “ensuring that [students] have the best opportunity to succeed in their academic achievement.” Participant 3 noted that providing

equity within instruction requires teachers to be “intentional” about equity. She expressed that classroom lessons should include multiple “opportunities [for students] to share their thinking.” The teacher expressed concern about promoting inequities in the classroom through biased instructional materials. For example, Participant 3 remarked, “The curriculum does not provide many images that [students can] relate to.” She felt pressured to “teach [for] a standardized test” and tailor her instruction to “average learners.”

Participant 3 felt that educators should reflect on practices to examine inequities. One theme expressed several times was the need to review behaviors as a teacher to improve equitable instruction practices. For example, she said, “Students in high-poverty schools do not see many teachers [who] look like them.” Participant 3 believed teacher, school, and district leader biases contribute to inequitable policies and practices. She implemented equitable instructional practices in her classroom by “providing real-world connections and expressions.” Participant 3 believed that the key to an equitable classroom was a classroom environment that is a “safety net.” The participant made sure that her students felt valued. Valuing students and allowing them to “express themselves” was how Participant 3 went “beyond the curriculum.”

Participant 3 perceived that students in high-poverty communities experience “identity cris[es],” and she sought to show them that they were “valued, seen, and loved.” She noted that the pressure to achieve a specific goal for a test score obstructed her autonomy in implementing equitable instructional practices. Participant 3 stated, “You [teachers] have to kind of stay locked into the curriculum, to the scope and sequence,

making sure that you are on this pace." In the first 15 years of the participant's teaching career, she did not feel adequately prepared to implement equitable instructional practices. She described a lack of support in developing the skills and craft she needed. Participant 3 felt more prepared to implement equitable instructional practices through training and resources due to personal research. The teacher desired to receive support and professional development to help students overcome the barriers of poverty.

Participant 4

Participant 4's interview produced 31 codes with 76 references. The participant felt that many teachers in high-poverty schools do not have the knowledge and skills they need to implement equitable instructional practices. For example, she stated, "Many parents are focused on survival, and many teachers do not understand that." Participant 4 expressed having the moral obligation to "model the importance of education" and take on a "parental role" because she also had a high-poverty background. She identified the skills and knowledge that teachers need to become threats to inequities, such as goal-setting with students, building an in-depth knowledge of students, being consistent with presence, and modeling high expectations. The teacher expressed that she could not "fully equip the students" but that she was laying "a foundation for skills that can carry them."

The teacher described her preparedness because of her relatability to the students, stating, "I am them." She inspired her students by using her life experiences to guide relationship-building in the school. She expressed that students could sense "genuine care" and perform better when they know others care about them. She felt like students

do not understand, which causes some educators to judge students. Based on inequities within schools, she said, “I see a removal of our [students’] culture.”

Participant 4 felt that students need “a little bit more than the curriculum,” explaining, “Materials in my school do not glorify the students’ identities.” The teacher felt like the curriculum was “not diverse enough.” She believed in analyzing multiple aspects of students’ data because “they should not be a number.” The participant perceived that, as a school and organization, there was a focus on students’ deficits. As a result, there were inequitable opportunities provided to students within high-poverty schools across the district.

Participant 5

Participant 5’s interview produced 26 codes with 47 references. Participant 5 defined equity for high-poverty students as “students having equal opportunities and experiences within a school.” She described “creativity” as a critical skill that teachers must possess to provide equitable instructional materials. She believed that there was a lack of funding for providing students with materials and opportunities. She designed lessons to build background knowledge of the topics she taught. The participant also believed that “systemic injustices” contributed to the barriers her students faced. She recalled taking a vocabulary assessment as a child and that her family members referred to a term in a way different from the assessment. She believed in “intentional and strategic” experiences for students, consistently discussing that students’ knowledge is key to success. For example, she used Socratic seminars to allow her students to share

various values and knowledge. Further, the teacher discussed the irrelevancy of the curriculum to the culture of her students.

Participant 5 believed that changes in autonomy occur as a teacher gains experience. She noted that her classroom's limited resources obstructed her autonomy to implement equitable instructional practices in her classroom. She perceived her administrators as supportive of equitable instructional practices. She believed that the organization determines the autonomy, which often presents a challenge. The participant said, "If the administration cannot relate to the students, then they [administrators] are not going to allow a teacher to have the autonomy to get it done the way [that] it needs to get it done."

Participant 5 believed that professional development opportunities were insufficient means of preparing teachers for equitable instructional practices. She noted that she related to high-poverty students because she grew up in the same environment. She planned lessons with students' barriers in mind and believed that her shared background enabled her to teach with "compassion." She said, "It is bigger than textbook practice." Participant 5 felt prepared to teach students in poverty, explaining, "I have to be a problem-solver because I had to grow up solving problems."

Participant 6

Participant 6's interview produced 38 codes with 70 references. Participant 6 explained that her organization's leaders shifted funds to ensure that students in poverty have access to technology, high-quality curricular materials, and certified teachers. She believed that knowing where students are academically and using data "is the foundation"

for individually meeting students' needs. It is an expectation within the organization that instruction should provide for the needs of individual students. The teacher believed that "education is elevation" for students in poverty. Her students experienced generational poverty, and she related to students because she grew up in a similar environment. However, she believed that funding largely contributed to inequities. She said, "It is unfortunate because some districts get the best teachers that money can buy."

Participant 6 believed that education was a "Catch-22" for students who live in poverty. She said,

> In order for me to get out of poverty, I would have to be educated, but my education is not [of] a high quality; what kind of chance do I stand of escaping poverty? So, the statistics are very low for students who live in poverty.

Further, the participant stated, "Education is one factor that helps students move out of poverty." As a teacher who grew up in a poor family, she believed that acknowledging and identifying her biases made her better able to implement equitable instructional practices. She noted that personal work began with the teacher.

Participant 6 "[did] her groundwork" and determined "why" her students expressed themselves in certain ways, academically and behaviorally. Participant 6 believed that nothing could provide adequate preparation for a teacher to implement equitable instructional practices. She proclaimed that providing equitable instructional practice was a "choice" and supported putting systems in place to provide instructional support for students. The participant noted that supporting equitable instructional

practices requires parental improvement on the district level. Participant 6 asserted that teachers wanted to feel “safety” when making instructional decisions.

Participant 7

Participant 7’s interview produced 21 codes with 50 references. Participant 7 described equity in education as “having the same opportunity as any [other] student.” She discussed several ways that her school offered equitable opportunities for students—for example, “We provide afterschool programs.” She believed that after-school programs gave students who lacked assistance at home the chance for enrichment and remediation. She noted that the lack of resources obstructed her ability to provide equity in the classroom. However, she proclaimed that the school principal “goes above and beyond to ensure that the [students] get what they need.” The principal held “job fairs” for parents to “bridge the gap between school and home.”

Technology was a resource that obstructed the participant’s instruction. Participant 7 believed that her school had many certified teachers but that there were “deficits,” as many lacked the pedagogical skills and experience to close the achievement gap. She built “background knowledge” and “vocabulary” in her classroom to ensure success. She believed that “trauma-informed practices” contributed to her ability to implement equitable instructional practices in her classroom. She “connects learning to what they [students] can relate to” and stated that she is “up until midnight” to determine “what do I need to do to get [students] to understand?” She desired more “support” from the administration in implementing equitable instructional practices in her classroom.

Participant 8

Participant 8's interview produced 14 codes with 34 references. Participant 8 described equity in education as providing students with "resources and support" to become successful. He believed that his knowledge of "students' background[s]" gave him the ability to support students to "meet their potential." Participant 8 asserted that the "lack of community resources" obstructed students' ability to succeed and that it was his job "to provide opportunities that bridge the gap." Participant 8's philosophy was motivating students to believe that "I am someone." Such a mentality was the key to his ability to implement equitable instructional practices.

Participant 8 described several experiences he provided to students to ensure that "community barriers" did not obstruct their ability to succeed in school. He valued students' "rich culture" to enable them to believe in themselves. He also provided opportunities to connect home life and school for students within classroom instruction. Participant 8 felt he needed to enrich the curricular materials because it was not "culturally relevant" to his students. The teacher described his preparedness to provide equitable instructional practices are due to his experience teaching in high-poverty schools. Participant 8 believed that his students were "fighting" for their identities. Ultimately, Participant 8 wanted more support from "the district office" to increase his skills and provide students with "resources and opportunities."

Participant 9

Participant 9's interview produced 12 codes with 18 references. The participant described equity in education as "giving students opportunities to succeed regardless of

where they live." Participant 9 believed she had to "encourage" and not "judge" students for them to succeed in school. Participant 9 stated that her experience growing up in a high-poverty household enabled her to provide equitable instructional practices. She described that poverty presented barriers, such as a "lack of food" or "supplies" to her students. Participant 9 brought "food and supplies" to her students each year. She took steps toward "building her students' self-esteem" to help them begin "excelling in school." She believed that building relationships to "understand" students were the key to counteracting students' barriers within her classroom.

Participant 9 described policies, such as "grading and curricular practices," that obstructed her ability to provide equitable experiences in her classroom. She believed that "evaluation policies confined" teaching practices in her classroom. She used instructional strategies her "administration does not know about" to provide equitable instructional practices. She believed the "organizations' focus" is "the standardized test." By means of solving the problem, Participant 9 felt that "funding" could contribute to the provision of equitable instructional experiences for her students. Participant 9 also desired support through "community and parental relationships" and a connection between the "school and community."

Participant 10

Participant 10's interview produced 10 codes with 20 references. Participant 10 discussed the "generational barriers" of students who live in poverty. The participant believed that providing equity for students in poverty required giving them time to relate to instructional practices and curriculum. She referenced background knowledge as a

barrier that obstructed students in her classroom, one she counteracted by building background knowledge in daily lessons.

Participant 10 described experiences in which she and her colleagues were reprimanded for "deviating from the script." She found it challenging to connect learning for students who live in poverty because she did not come from the same environment. Participant 10 believed the organization did "not know the difference between equity and equality," which obstructed her ability to implement equitable instructional practices in her classroom. Participant 10 expressed a commitment to teaching in high-poverty schools.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I utilized several strategies in this study to ensure credibility. The interview guide received several rounds of feedback from committee members and experts in the education field, which I used to modify questions and increase alignment to the research question. Member checking occurred with the participants to verify that I had accurately interpreted their perceptions and achieved credibility. Additionally, peer debriefing enabled me to examine my bias when interpreting the data. Finally, I explored the data set through the lens of the study's literature review and conceptual framework.

Transferability

The following steps contributed to the study's transferability. The sampling strategy provided for a diverse participant selection. I invited teachers from six school districts in Louisiana, for a total of 8,692 teachers. I used numerous direct quotes from

the 10 interviews to describe the participants' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices within high-poverty schools. I undertook detailed documentation of the data collection, requirement, and coding with Zoom software to ensure the study's transferability. In addition, I recruited participants having various levels of teaching experience from multiple school districts to enhance transferability.

Dependability

I used several strategies to increase dependability. There was consistent data collection, recruitment, and analysis process among all participants. I checked the audio recordings for accuracy several times. Member checking enabled me to confirm my interpretations of the findings consistent with the data set. In addition, peer debriefs allowed for an internal agreement after coding the data.

Confirmability

I used several approaches to establish this study's confirmability, including field and interview notes throughout the data collection and analysis process for reflexivity. Reflexivity enabled me to examine my biases toward the phenomenon under study. In addition, I engaged in line-by-line open coding to analyze the data beyond the study's conceptual framework and identify discrepant data.

Results

This study had one research question on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. The findings showed that participants believed they had adequate preparation to implement equitable instructional practices within their classrooms. However, three themes emerged

pertaining to factors that obstructed or contributed to their abilities to implement such practices.

The first theme was teachers' belief that district policies and practices obstructed equitable instructional practices because they caused conflict in identities. The identity crisis theme had two subthemes: teacher identify and student identity. The second theme was teachers' perceptions that experience provided preparation for implementing equitable instructional practices. This theme had two subthemes: life experience and classroom teaching experience. Principles were the third theme, as the participants described three principles that they instinctively applied to their equitable instructional practices. The theme of principles had three subthemes: commitment, relationship-building, and knowledge of students. The following sections present each theme in detail.

Theme 1: Identity Crisis

The first theme identified through data set analysis showed that the participants experienced identity crises due to district practices and policies. This theme had two subthemes: teacher identity and student identity. For the primary research question, the teachers reflected on their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices within their classrooms. The teachers described the autonomy and flexibility of or barriers to implementing equitable instructional practices. All 10 participants expressed the importance of providing equitable instructional practices; however, they discussed how district practices and policies could obstruct these practices.

The participants identified equitable instructional strategies as a significant step in closing the income achievement gap. All 10 participants perceived equitable instructional

practices as commitments sometimes out of their control as teachers. There was a shared vision of using equitable instructional practices to counteract the barriers their students encountered daily. They believed that equity in education provided students with "a fair shot at success in life through [the] opportunities given within the school environment." Participants 5, 7, and 9 asserted that equitable practices gave students opportunities to combat poverty barriers. Specifically, Participant 2 referred to equity in education as "students having access to quality education and being able to be a part of something where they are given an opportunity to learn."

Participant 6 referred to equitable instruction for students who live in poverty as "elevation." Participant 3 stated,

> I think that equity offered in high-poverty areas means that students can access individualized resources to give them the best opportunity for an education. These [resources] will enable them to be productive citizens after they graduate high school and move on to adulthood.

Participant 1 said that equity in education for students who live in poverty "means that everybody [students] has a fair shot, regardless of any circumstances, regardless of background, home life, or any ethnicity or anything social [or] economical, they have the same shot as anybody else."

All the participants expressed a strong belief in the importance of equitable instructional practices. However, when asked about the autonomy or flexibility in implementing equitable instructional practices, they described the district policies and procedures obstructing their abilities to implement these practices due to the lack of

flexibility they believed to have in the classroom. The participants also discussed the impact of practices and policies on the identities of educators and students.

Subtheme 1: Teacher Identity

A subtheme of identity crisis that emerged was that the teachers lacked the autonomy to implement equitable instructional practices within their classroom. Seven of the 10 participants described how their organizations contributed to dismantling equitable instructional practices through 11 coded references. Several participants expressed the misalignment between the practices they needed to incorporate in their classroom and the practices they were allowed to incorporate. The participants described the obstacles presented by district policies and procedures. Several participants described how the organizational practices used to track and monitor student growth contribute to inequities. For example, Participant 3 discussed the organizational norm of grouping students by ability, stating, “I think, for years, as educators, we tended to think that [the] grouping of achievement-leveled students together would produce an increase in their performance.” Similarly, Participant 6 noted how data tracking practices focused on the negative aspects of student learning. Participant 4 stated,

> They never address how we can push [students] forward; we focus on the struggling learner, not the advanced learner. How will we accelerate the advanced learners? High-poverty schools are predominately filled with struggling learners, so the advanced learner never gets opportunities.

The participants also described the pressure of teaching for standardized test scores. Participant 3 remarked,

> If we want to speak realistically, sometimes districts contribute to inequities. For example, sometimes the pressure placed on teachers to perform in terms of test scores lends itself to teachers' targeting their instruction to teach to average- to high-average learners, and it is sometimes those students in poverty demographics [who] get lost in the shuffle.

Participant 5 described the use of mandated curricular materials that do not provide for students' needs:

> We are forced into a curriculum. And I know [our organization] wants a rigorous curriculum. However, sometimes, I feel that our [students] need a little bit more of something else in addition to the curriculum. I see how the curriculum is not representing [demographic of students]. So, I feel that when we choose curricula, we need to choose curricula representing students. We [demographic of students] are included in the curriculum, but in a way that does not glorify us [demographic of students]. I am saying we [demographic of students] are seen in the same impoverished light.

Another example of the misalignment with the participants' teaching visions was the mandated curricula. Six participants described curriculum usage. The teachers perceived curriculum mandates as a practice disadvantageous to students living in poverty. More specifically, the teachers felt pressured to stay on pacing calendars even though the students had not mastered grade-level standards. Participants 4, 5, and 7 stated that their curricula did not provide for all students' needs. Participant 9 described getting

penalized on an observation score because she was not on the target or pace for the organization's scope sequence. Participant 9 reported,

> I have been told, "No, you cannot say this." [Organizational leaders] are telling [us] what [we] have to say: "Why are you moving away from the script?" I was penalized for my evaluation scores for it. I know my students. I know what I need to do to get them there. And immediately, I was shut down.

Participant 7 expressed frustration about the time constraints required by the organization's scope and sequence. Participant 7 stated,

> All [school administrators] said was, "Wherever the district tells you, you need to be [scope and sequence], you need to be on pace." If [district personnel] come to your room, if they say they want you on unit 10, that is where you need to be. This is very frustrating to me because I just felt like I was always racing the clock. And when students did not get it, there was no time for reteaching. There was no time for going back and reviewing content. That was unfair to my students and me.

Subtheme 2: Student Identity

The participants also described how organizational practices in policies contributed to students' struggles to express their identities. Eight of the 10 teachers shared experiences in which they perceived that district policies and procedures obstructed students' identities and expression. Several participants discussed the lack of equitable opportunities provided to high-poverty schools. For example, Participants 3, 7, 9, and 10 mentioned that students' opportunities vary based on SES and school.

Participant 9 stated, “The other schools within that same district should also offer enrichment programs to students, regardless of where they live.”

Participant 7 also discussed the lack of resources provided to the students in her classroom. She acknowledged that a lack of technology obstructed her provision of an equitable classroom environment:

> One barrier that sticks out to me this year more than ever is the lack of updated technology. I have five computers in my classroom. Moreover, out of the five, only one works correctly. And that is because it is the newest one that I received 2 years ago. But it does not have a camera.

Students could not obtain instruction without access to technology due to the organization’s COVID-19 school attendance policies.

The teachers asserted that students could not express their identities due to a lack of culturally relevant organizational practices, policies, and curricula. Eight participants emphasized the lack of curricula relevant to students, which they believed obstructed student identities by not enabling them to express themselves individually. Participant 3 stated, “Students do not get that opportunity to see images in their textbooks in the curriculum [that] relate to them and their culture. For me, the education system and the policies that are in place contribute to inequity.”

Participant 4 believed that the curriculum at her school contributed to deficit thinking about students’ identities:

> Instead of enhancing the kids' culture and [focusing] on diversity and embracing that and teaching [students] to embrace it, [it is] almost like the curriculum wants to remove it from them. I do not want to take away their dialect.

Many participants also described how the mandated curricular materials focused on homework, which they felt was an unfair practice for many students living in poverty. Participant 6 stated, "There is no homework. Whether the curriculum suggests that or not, I am never going to assign it." She described how many students lived with parents who worked several jobs who could not complete homework with their children. The parents had to choose "survival" over homework.

The participants' perceived that certain organizational policies and practices obstructed their implementation of equitable instructional practices. One participant said, "My ability as a teacher to do what I know is best for students is hindered by district policies and practices." The participants also described how specific organizational policies obstructed students' self-identity and "expression."

Theme 2: Experiences

The participants discussed their preparation for implementing equitable instructional practices in their classrooms. Five of the 10 teachers said the organization-provided professional development opportunities and teacher preparation programs did not provide sufficient preparation for equitable instructional practices. Participant 3 said, "I felt like I was not adequately prepared to provide students with differentiated instruction [or] provide equity in their educational experience." Participants 5, 6, 7, and 8 described needing more complex preparation for equitable instructional practices than

available in teacher preparation programs and district-level professional development. Participant 5 said, “Teaching in poverty preparedness does not come from what you get in district-led professional developments, so honestly, it cannot prepare you for equitable instruction inside the classroom. Teaching in a poverty-stricken area is more than instructional strategies.”

Similarly, Participant 10 reported,

> There is nothing to prepare you for it. You can hear things in theory. Whether you go through an alternative certification program or you go through college, there are some things that you just will never be prepared for until you are in it.

Most participants expressed a lack of preparation for equitable instructional practices, but eight participants believed they were prepared for the experience. Two subthemes of experiences emerged from the data set: personal life experience and classroom teaching experience.

Subtheme 1: Life Experience

The subtheme of life experiences emerged from the participants’ beliefs that their personal experiences helped them implement equitable instructional practices. The participants described the life experiences that had an impact on their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. Four of the 10 participants felt that growing up in similar backgrounds enabled them to respond to biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in their classrooms. Participant 9 thought that her life experiences had prepared her, and she used her life story to relate to her students. Participant 6 expressed

that her life experiences were why she focused on access and equity for her students. Participant 4 stated,

> I say I can only speak to my own experiences [of] being in low-performing impoverished schools. Knowing what it is like to be there, knowing what it is like to be that kid [the student who lives in poverty]—I feel that experience is my best teacher.

Participant 5 related to students and understood their needs within the classroom:

> I can relate to [living in poverty] because I was once a free-lunch student. I have the personal history to relate to it. I have a sense of what my students need. My teacher knowledge of students kicks in a lot when I am preparing something for my students. I have the compassion, or I understand what the situation [barrier] is, and what is needed for them to be able to be successful because I come from [poverty].

Participant 9 believed that her life experiences enabled her to teach students living in poverty, and she used her life story to relate to her students.

Subtheme 2: Classroom Teaching Experience

The subtheme of classroom teaching experience emerged from the participants' beliefs that teaching experiences contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. The participants described the benefits of learning their students' backgrounds throughout their teaching experiences. Additionally, the teachers noted how their experience teaching high-poverty students enabled them to counteract societal inequities in their classrooms. Participants 1, 3, 8, and 10 expressed that they lacked

sufficient preparation for effectively teaching high-poverty students at the beginning of their teaching careers. Participant 3 stated, “I would say, in terms of being an educator now—[because] this is my 25th year—I would say for the first 10 to 15 years, there was this feeling of not being adequately prepared.” The participants believed that there was no way to fully prepare educators to teach students living in poverty; they had to learn by doing it. Participant 10 stated, “You never know until you are in it.” Participant 8 described events in his classrooms for which he could have only prepared with teaching experience. He said, “I know that nothing in my day is ever fully prepared, no matter how prepared I think I am for the day. So, what prepares me for [my students]? My own job experience and life.”

The participants described the experiences that prepared them for implementing equitable instructional practices. I categorized their experiences as either life experiences or teaching experiences. The participants described how life and classroom teaching experience had provided them with the principles they needed to counteract barriers and implement equitable instructional practices within high-poverty schools.

Theme 3: Principles

All 10 participants attributed their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices to several principles that they instinctively applied to their teaching practices. The data analysis produced 37 codes, in which the 10 participants described how they applied an equity lens to their pedagogies, practices, and process decisions. I categorized the 37 codes into three subthemes: commitment, knowledge of students, and relationships. The participants shared the belief that one pedagogical practice could not

contribute to equitable instructional practices. The data also showed that implementing equitable instructional practices is a complex alignment between multiple support layers. The complex alignment within practices focused on prioritizing students' and families' needs within their schools.

Subtheme 1: Commitment

The subtheme of commitment emerged from data analysis in the participants' beliefs in the principles of commitment to using equity and decision-making to inform instructional practices. The participants described their commitment to their students with a collective vision of their students focused on equity. Participant 2 described applying all decisions "through the lens of why." Participant 3 described her commitment to her students as "a passion for growing" when discussing equity for students living in poverty. Participant 1 described a commitment to "removing barriers" to student progress to "give them a fair shot." Participant 5 described her commitment as "intentional" and "strategic" opportunities for students. According to Participant 6, implementing equitable instructional practices takes a "willingness to do what it takes to make sure that student needs are being met." She stated, "When you talk about breaking the barriers of generational poverty, then we start to think about, well, then what would be something that could potentially be a stepping stone? Well, education is elevation."

The participants also revealed their commitment to enhancing their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices through reflective practices. They also described searching for professional development opportunities to improve their abilities to apply an equity lens to their pedagogies and process decisions. Participant 8 believed

that the key to her teaching ability was “reflecting on your practices and things you are doing.” Participant 1 committed to professionally developing her instructional practices and stated, “I always reach out, learn about best equitable practices.” Participant 1 and Participant 4 described “creating my opportunities to develop my craft.”

The participants’ principle of commitment to equitable instructional practices was their way to cultivate equitable, antioppressive ideologies and intuitional cultures. They also described the principle of having an in-depth knowledge of their students. Knowledge of students was the second subtheme of the principles theme.

Subtheme 2: Knowledge of Students

Seven of 10 participants described how their in-depth knowledge of their students contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. The participants noted how they learned about their students to enhance student learning. They defined their in-depth understanding of students as “background knowledge,” which they used to “meet students’ needs-based [on] where those students are individual[ly].” More specifically, Participant 1 stated, “Know your students, both in what they do in the classroom [and] what goes on in their home li[ves].”

The participants described several experiences within their teaching careers when their in-depth knowledge of their students enabled them to meet students’ needs. Participant 2 provided an example: “[A student] could not focus because they were hungry. I may provide them a snack that they can eat, [and] I let them leave the room to eat the snack.” The participant perceived addressing her student’s hunger as an equitable practice because it enabled the student to concentrate on the lesson after meeting a basic

need. Participant 1 also shared how she used background knowledge to make instructional decisions:

> Even in this virtual realm, there are barriers. This is something that we are dealing with today. For example, [barriers] might be [what] students are during the school day, [they might be] struggling because they might be taking care of siblings at home. This means that I need to be available for those students in the evenings and afternoons to help them with their school work.

All the participants valued their knowledge of students and viewed it as an opportunity to enhance student learning in their classrooms. The data also produced the subtheme of relationships that aligned with teachers' in-depth knowledge of their students. Subtheme 3 of the principles within equitable instructional practices was relationship-building to implement equitable instructional practices.

Subtheme 3: Relationships

The participants noted that building positive relationships with students and parents was a vital part of providing equitable instructional practices. Participant 1 believed that "my job as an educator [is] to try to figure out what I can do" to counteract the barriers to student success by "working with the family and working with the student." Participant 8 stated that teachers must "build that relationship with your [students]" to implement equitable instructional practices, and he accomplished this by making himself available to parents and students. Participant 8 stated, "I have a connection with the parents in this community."

The positive relationships between the participants and the students and their parents enabled the participants to "create within the [students] a desire to perform and to grow." The participants perceived relationship-building as a way of becoming "relatable" to parents and students. Participant 4 described the effects of being "relatable to students" as "the more relatable I am to them, the more they want to perform." In addition, Participant 8 believed relationship-building contributed to "boosting [students'] confidence, letting them know that they deserve an education."

The participants described the principles contributing to their ability to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. In the subtheme of principles, the participants showed their commitment to equity in their instructional practices and process decisions. For the subtheme of student knowledge, the participants provided for students' differentiated needs. Finally, for the subtheme of relationships, the participants described how relationship-building supported equitable instructional practices. The participants expressed that such principles enabled them to prioritize the needs of their students and their students' families.

Discrepant Data

One unique code that did not align with the emergent themes was the belief that teachers should accept administrative support. Participant 2 described professional development needs differently than the others. Participant 2 perceived teachers as unwilling to receive professional support:

> Teachers need to look at support through a positive lens. Also, [they must be] able to feel comfortable with coteaching [supports]. Teachers can fully understand

> what they are doing when looking at the lesson. [They must] not just [be] reading and highlighting, but taking their lessons and digging in more profoundly, maybe even pre-teaching [curriculum] to themselves, but not just looking at [curriculum] at the surface level.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. I addressed this study's purpose with a basic qualitative research approach with teachers from six school districts. I answered the research question by interviewing 10 participants from high-poverty schools. All 10 teachers discussed the purpose and importance of implementing equitable instructional practices within high-poverty schools, describing their abilities through rich descriptions of their principles. Many participating teachers expressed that they did not learn how to create equitable classroom environments through professional development or in teaching programs. Instead, they considered their personal lives and classroom teaching experiences as preparation for teaching students in high-poverty schools. Although all the participants committed to cultivating equitable, antioppressive ideologies and institutional cultures, they believed that organizational practices and policies obstructed their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. The teachers expressed the need for further development for equitable instructional practices.

Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory was the conceptual framework used to develop the interview questions and analyze the data. The equity literacy theory presents the five critical abilities that educators must embrace to create and sustain equitable

schools. Overall, the participants in this study showed their commitment to understanding and deepening their knowledge of equitable instructional practices.

In Chapter 5, I present an overview of the study and my interpretations of the findings categorized by the research question and the conceptual framework. Chapter 5 also includes the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for practices and research, and the study's conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. The study population consisted of 10 K–8 teachers who worked in high-poverty schools in six districts in Louisiana. The participants had varying levels of teaching experience. The research question guiding the study was: How do teachers in high-poverty schools perceive and describe their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices? The findings showed that the teachers perceived that they could implement equitable instructional practices; however, they identified the factors that obstructed or contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools as: (a) organizational practices and policies, (b) experiences that contributed to their preparedness to implement equitable instructional practices, and (c) principles that influenced their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. I used Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory to categorize, analyze, and compare teachers' interview responses related to the framework's five abilities. In this chapter, I present the study findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications.

Interpretation of the Findings

The participants described their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools and perceived that they could implement such practices. They provided examples of how they put equitable instructional practices at the forefront of their decision-making as teachers. The participants also discussed how their instructional practices aligned with their definitions of equity for students living in

poverty. The findings of this study confirmed, invalidated, and contributed to both the concept of equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools and the conceptual framework of this study.

Interpretation of Findings Related to the Research Question

The findings from this study aligned with existing research on equitable instructional practices. The participants provided several examples of the instructional practices they perceived contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices, such as learning students' needs and recognizing the perpetuation of inequities in schools. These findings aligned with those of Allen and FitzGerald (2017), who found that invitational practices and cultural care, such as listening to students and recognizing their basic needs, had a positive impact on students reaching their potential. In addition, the findings aligned with the literature that equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools are complex phenomena related to sociological and pedagogy (Hwang et al., 2018). Gridnoff et al. (2015) described recognizing the school practices enabling the reproduction of inequities as an equitable practice for improving marginalized students' outcomes. Moreover, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) suggested that teachers understand the work they need to change a system, not the individual student.

Alternately, the findings from this study did not align with existing research on equitable instructional practices based on this practice setting. Participants consistently detailed an arrangement between their perceptions of the purpose of equity and their instructional practices. For example, participants were able to detail how they counteract poverty barriers that students experience within their classroom environment. This

finding did not match several studies showing a misalignment in teachers' perceptions and their instructional actions for equitable practices. Nadelson et al. (2019) measured how equity mindset aligns with instructional practices, with their participants consistently detailing a misalignment between their perceptions of the purpose of equity and their instructional practices. Likewise, Sandoval et al. (2020) found inconsistencies between how teacher candidates conceptualized equity and instructional practices. Such findings suggest the need for further research to align teacher practices to an equity literate mindset.

The findings from this study contributed to the literature by presenting the themes that positively or negatively impacted teachers' abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. The participants perceived themselves as prepared to implement equitable instructional practices; they also described their guiding principles and experiences that contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. The teachers further discussed the organizational policies and practices that obstructed their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices.

Interpretation of Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

I used Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework to guide this study, construct the research question, and explore teachers' perceptions in high-poverty schools. The findings provided insight into teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices, and I related their perceptions to the framework's five abilities. Three themes emerged from the data analysis:

1. Organizational policies and practices obstructed equitable instructional practices by causing conflicts in teacher and student identities.
2. The teachers developed the ability to respond to biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in the immediate term through life and teaching experiences.
3. The teachers described the ability to actively cultivate equitable, antioppressive ideologies and institutional cultures as the principles that they applied to their instructional practices.

Identity Crisis

Several scholars have explored the impact of inequitable conditions on student achievement (Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017; Owens, 2017; Rogers et al., 2018). Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework presents this ability as a foundational step in becoming a threat to inequities. The current study participants identified the subtlest biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in learning materials and classroom interactions. In addition, the participants recognized the disadvantages that school and organizational policies present to marginalized students. The participants' perceptions aligned with the literature that indicates that inequitable practices produce barriers for students living in poverty, such as a lack of resources (Baker & Weber, 2016; Knight, 2017), focus on a standardized test (Horn et al., 2016), ability-grouping students (Garner et al., 2017), and lack of culturally relevant curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Baker and Weber (2016) detailed the impact of a lack of funding in high-poverty schools on resources and opportunities for students living in poverty. The current study findings

aligned with the research that shows that limited resources contribute to inequities within the school environment. However, this study also contributed to the literature by showing how teachers in high-poverty schools counteract such barriers by providing their students with opportunities and resources.

In equity literacy theory, Gorski (2016) suggested that teachers must have the ability to recognize biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies. The current study's participants contributed to this knowledge by describing the effects of policies on teacher and student identity. The participants discussed the differences between their teaching philosophies and their organization's practices. The teachers struggled to find their identities because they lacked the autonomy to provide what they perceived to be equitable instructional practices. The current study findings resemble those of Cho and Choi (2016), who found that teachers experience tensions between their professional teaching identities and personal identities outside of the occupation. Similarly, Hinnant-Crawford (2016) noted that teachers believed their personal actions did not influence educational policy and did not make a difference in their efforts beyond their classrooms. Several of the current study participants described being penalized on performance evaluations when implementing the instructional practices they perceived as necessary to counteract the systemic barriers to students.

Studies have shown that teachers lack preparation in addressing social and cultural diversity in the classroom (Ben-Peretz & Flores, 2018; Fine-Davis & Faas, 2014). Ben-Peretz and Flores (2018) found that teachers perceived that they had limited abilities to teach with social justice in mind. Similarly, Szelei et al. (2019) reported that

the misrepresentation of marginalized students occurred due to a lack of instructional practices that did not contribute to students' voices. The participants in this study presented several examples of integrating their students' voices into their instructional practices; however, they also described a persistent student identity struggle caused by a lack of resources and curricular materials for students to express themselves. The findings align with those of Ryoo et al. (2019), who indicated the importance of linking students' lives and classroom content.

The participants in this study also noted how standardized testing preparation presented obstacles to student identity. They described how organizationally mandated test preparation policies pose limitations to student expression and identity in the classroom. The participants stated that they felt pressured to teach for only tested standards due to their organizations' scopes and sequences. Similarly, Wasserberg (2018) found that an overemphasis on test preparation limited opportunities for engaging pedagogical skills. In addition, the participants expressed that standardized preparation policies required them to use curricular materials that were culturally irrelevant to their students' lives.

Experiences

In equity literacy theory, Gorski (2020) suggested that equity literate educators can respond to biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in the immediate term. The participants displayed a collective belief that teacher preparation programs and district-led professional development did not provide the facilitation and content knowledge needed to provide equitable opportunities for students living in poverty. The participants

described how their life and teaching experiences enabled them to recognize the barriers faced by students living in high-poverty households and implement equitable instruction practices. The study findings indicate that teachers who grow up in similar socioeconomic backgrounds as their students can understand the barriers having adverse effects on students. The findings aligned with those of Whipp and Geronime (2017), who found that teachers with significant experience in high-poverty settings were strong predictors of retention and teaching commitment. However, in the current study, the participants raised in different social-economic backgrounds expressed that they considered their teaching experience as preparation for dealing with poverty barriers.

Unlike participants in the work of Brenner et al. (2016) and Brown and Crippen (2017), the teachers in the current study did not believe their professional development experiences contributed to their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices. However, the participants strove to learn how to implement equitable instructional practices, expressing a desire for more professional development in the area of equity. This finding aligned with research on the role of equity in teacher professional development and teacher preparation programs. Jez (2020) examined the role of equity in teacher preparation and suggested closer examination be made into the alignment between the theory used and the practices expected from teacher candidates in equitable instructional practices. Moreover, Mills et al. (2020) recommended that teacher preparation programs focus on instructional practices to support marginalized students.

Principles

Gorski (2014) defined equity for educators of students living in poverty and determined the 12 principles that equity literate educators use in their decision-making and classroom practices. The findings from the current study had several principles that aligned with Gorski's, such as the skills and knowledge the participants needed to actively cultivate equitable, antioppressive ideologies and institutional cultures. In the following subsections, I present the participants' principles of commitment, knowledge of students, and relationships.

Commitment. Lee et al. (2018) found that teachers in the United States defined equity as a "moral obligation." Several participants in the current study had the same definition as those in Lee et al.'s study. However, many of the participants defined their role in equitable instructional practices as a commitment to apply an equity lens to their instructional practices. Participants' commitment to equity aligned with the findings of Souto-Manning and Winn (2019), who suggested that teachers should commit to counteracting historical injustices that obstruct equity in schools. Ellis et al. (2019) recommended that teachers possess a shared commitment to transformative justice for historically oppressed students. Rojas and Liou (2018) suggested that teachers must reflect on the philosophies underpinning their student expectations to align their commitment to equity and social justice with their classroom pedagogies. Similarly, the participants described reflection as a tool for making their commitment evident in their daily classroom practices. Moreover, Lee et al. recommended that teachers conduct critical examinations of their equitable teaching strategies to better align their

instructional practices with equity. The teachers in the current study believed that their commitment aligned with their abilities to counteract poverty barriers through their instructional practices.

Knowledge of Students. Like Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory, the participants in the current study committed to developing an in-depth knowledge of students to understand the influence of poverty barriers on school engagement. More specifically, the participants perceived that their understanding of students' lives contributed to their ability to implement equitable instruction practices and high student achievement. This study's findings resembled those of Sibley et al. (2017), who found that teachers believed that learning about students' individual needs and strengths enabled them to better support students. Similarly, Shields et al. (2016) concluded that systematic, comprehensive supports for addressing out-of-school barriers to learning were means of increasing academic achievement in a high-poverty school. The teachers in this study described how they used their knowledge of students' lives in their decision-making and lesson planning.

According to Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory, equity-literate educators prioritize the needs and interests of historically marginalized students. Naven et al. (2019) examined the influence of policies and practices on the participation of children living in poverty and found several barriers to such students' school experiences. According to Naven et al., understanding and listening to students who live in poverty provided educators with insight into the actions that enable all students to have equitable school experiences. However, Blitz et al. (2020) found that school personnel did not know the

effects of systemic oppression on students living in high-poverty communities and how they could assist the barriers faced by students. Unlike the findings of Blitz et al., the participants in this study leveraged their knowledge of the barriers faced by students in poverty to counteract those challenges at school. The participants explicitly cited instances where they addressed home barriers, such as a lack of food at home, in the school environment. The participants also assisted working parents by offering free after-school programs for students and developing job fairs for unemployed parents. Additionally, the teachers described how they used their knowledge of students' experiences at home in their approaches to equitable instruction. Intentionally building in-depth knowledge of students beyond test scores provided the participants with an entry point to a critical principle of equitable instruction.

Relationships. The participants also described the principle of positive relationship-building with students and their parents. Gorski (2016) defined the five abilities that educators need to become threats to inequity; however, the participants extended these abilities through the collective principle of their relationships with parents. The participants believed that equity could not occur if their students' parents did not trust the education system; this finding aligned with those of Sadiku and Sylaj (2019), who found trust between parents and teachers vital in building family-school relationships. Xuan et al. (2019) found that although positive student relationships were means of partially mediating the relationship between school SES and math, the effect was not significant. In contrast, in this study, relationship-building with parents and students contributed to teachers' abilities to implement equitable instructional practices.

Moreover, Kamrath and Bradford (2020) suggested that educators in high-poverty schools should pay attention to opportunities to build relationships with parents and students.

Limitations of the Study

As indicated in Chapter 1, several limitations affected the trustworthiness and transferability of this study. One limitation of this study was that data represented 10 participants from the southeast United States; therefore, the findings are not generalizable to other U.S. regions. Although 10 participants are an acceptable sample size for a basic qualitative study, there were limited diverse perspectives in the data. This was a study limited to teachers in high-poverty schools. The participant population did not include teachers of students living in poverty at schools, with many students not living in poverty. In addition, the number of participants limited the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation was the unintentional bias that I could have brought to the study. My experience teaching in high-poverty schools could have created unintentional biases during the data analysis. I used several strategies to reduce bias. During the data analysis process, I conducted several rounds of coding through inductive coding and through the lens of Gorski's (2016) equity literacy theory to mitigate potential bias. After data collection and categorization, the participants validated my interpretations of their perceptions through member checking. I also used analytical memos and peer debriefing during data analysis to remove my personal bias when interpreting the results.

Recommendations

The study's limitations and strengths provided recommendations for future research. In this study, I explored teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. In this section, I present recommendations for future studies and organizational practices.

Recommendation 1: Organizational Examination of Practices and Policies

The results of the present study suggest that knowledge of practices and policies contributes to teachers' abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. The teachers in this study frequently described how they aligned organizational practices and policies with their teaching philosophies. Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework indicates that teachers should sustain bias-free, equitable institutional cultures by examining the programs and strategies that do not contribute to equity. In the present study, the participants perceived that their organizations' lack of equity literacy policies obstructed their abilities to implement equitable practices. Examining the organizational practices and policies that either obstruct or contribute to equity is a way to help students living in poverty.

Recommendation 2: Development of Professional Development of Equitable Instructional Practices

The participants believed the professional development they received was inadequate preparation for teaching students living in high poverty. They articulated their desire to become equity-literate educators through further professional development. This study's findings could contribute to the development of training for implementing

equitable instruction practices. The findings also suggest the need to improve teacher preparation programs by adding research-based equitable instructional practices to higher education courses.

Recommendation 3: Development of an Organizational Vision for Equity

This study's findings suggest that the participants perceived their organizations as lacking equitable instructional visions for students living in poverty. The participants described their commitment to applying an equity lens to all their instructional and decision-making practices. Developing an organizational vision or framework for equity is a way to align classroom and school practices to contribute to student achievement. In addition, creating an equity literacy vision can contribute to the alignment between teachers' and districts' professional identities.

Recommendation 4: A Quantitative Study Measuring the Impact of Principles

The findings showed the equity-driven principles that participants perceived as having a positive effect on their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. Future scholars could research the impact of these principles on student outcomes with the quantitative method. A quantitative study on the effect of equitable principles on student outcomes could indicate the most impactful instructional practices for students living in poverty and contribute to the validity of this study's results.

Recommendation 5: Increase Transferability Through Replication of the Study

This study presented the perceptions of 10 teachers in the Southeastern United States. There are complex implications of poverty that vary by region. Replicating this

study with more participants from other U.S. regions could result in increased credibility and transferability. The conceptual framework in this study was specific to the diversity of students living in poverty. Conducting this study in other regions with more participants could enable researchers to study diverse perspectives on the phenomenon.

Implications

The findings contributed to social change by presenting the equitable practices that teachers perceived as having a positive impact on the achievement of students living in high poverty. This study also filled a gap in the literature. Researchers have suggested that teachers' insights could contribute to the implementation of equitable instructional practices for students living in poverty (Riordan et al., 2019). The purpose of the present study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty classrooms. The participants reflected on their abilities and provided insight into the practices and policies that obstructed or contributed to their ability to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. The findings presented detailed information about teachers' experiences with equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

This study addressed a gap in the literature, as research showed the need for studies on teachers' abilities to provide equitable instructional practices and their personal and professional variables (Nadelson et al., 2019). The findings presented the principles that the participants found critical for implementing equitable instructional practices. Data from this study could help with improving equitable opportunities for students living in poverty, as educators could include the principles into their pedagogies

and classroom decision-making skills. The study could also contribute to the professional development of teachers in high-poverty schools. This study's recommendations include the importance of evaluating the organizational policies and practices that affect students living in poverty. The findings could provide school and organizational leaders with insight as they determine school practices and policies in high-poverty areas. This study contributed to positive social change for teacher workforce development. Further positive social change could result from focusing on equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

Conclusion

The persistent achievement gap between students living in high-poverty and low-poverty households has been the focus of recent research. Despite policies, such as the ESSA (2015), for diminishing the impact of poverty on students, more work is needed. Studies have shown that equitable instructional practices and policies have a positive effect on students living in poverty. However, there was a gap in the literature on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instructional practices in high-poverty schools. I conducted semistructured interviews with 10 teachers from high-poverty schools. The teachers perceived that in-depth knowledge of the barriers faced by students living in poverty contributed to their abilities to implement equitable practices. Further, the participants believed that organizational practices and policies obstructed their abilities to

implement equitable practices. The participants described several principles they found critical for implementing equitable practices. Aligned with Gorski's (2020) equity literacy framework, the participants expressed their commitment to applying an equity lens to their pedagogies, practices, and process decisions.

The findings suggest the importance of supporting teachers' facilitation and content knowledge of equitable instructional practices. This study's participants identified the principles that contributed to their equitable instructional practices. However, there is a need for more research to effectively measure those principles.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Introductory Statement

[Read to interviewee] The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of their abilities to implement equitable instruction practices in high-poverty schools. This study's findings will show the professional supports that teachers may need to create equitable learning environments in high-poverty schools. I will preserve the information you will provide during this interview for 5 years and then destroy it. In addition, I will keep all the information that you provide confidential. This interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and I will audio-record with your permission.

[Turn on recording software.]

Interview Questions

1. What does equity in education mean for students in poverty? What are the ways that teachers attempt to address inequities within instruction?

    Probe: Tell me your experience teaching students in poverty. (if not directly answered)

2. What prevents students in poverty from accessing the instruction they need (barriers)?

    Probe: Can you tell me some of the barriers that your students face when in your classroom? (if not directly answered)

3. What do you perceive to be the causes of the barriers that you described in Question 2?

Probe: Why do you think this occurs in high-poverty school settings? (if not directly answered)

4. How have you responded to the barriers you described in Question 2 with your instructional practices?
5. Describe the specific instructional strategies you use to provide equitable instruction.
6. Talk to me about the autonomy or flexibility you have in providing equitable instructional practices in your classroom.
7. Discuss your preparedness for providing those equitable instructional practices and the reasons for your preparedness or lack thereof.

   Probe: Could you describe some of your experience with counteracting barriers within your daily lessons? (if not directly answered)
8. Describe any support or barriers that you have encountered while providing equitable instructional practices within your classroom.

   Probe: Tell about the barriers that you encounter as you attempt to provide equitable instructional practices within your classroom. (if not directly answered)
9. Describe the knowledge, skills, and professional support that you think you need to enhance your ability to provide equitable instructional practices.

Conclusion Statement

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. You have clearly described your perceptions of your ability to implement equitable instructional practices within your classroom. Is there anything else you would like to share before we finish this interview? I may need to send three to five follow-up questions after the interview. I will send you the follow-up questions via the email address that you provided me. Thank you again for participating. Please note that you can contact me if you have any questions or concerns.