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# Elementary Principals' Behaviors and Actions for Retaining Teachers

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College of Education

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Sharonda Gregory

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Walden University
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Abstract

Elementary Principals' Behaviors and Actions for Retaining Teachers

by

Sharonda Gregory


BS, Bowie State University, 1993

MS, Towson University, 1999




Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education




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May 2021

Abstract

Principal support is critical in promoting teacher retention, which has continued to be a challenge in elementary schools in the United States. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain how principals described their strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. The conceptual framework was based on Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership theory. The research questions addressed challenges, supports, and leadership practices principals identified that increased teacher retention in the elementary school setting. Semistructured interviews were conducted with eight elementary school principals who had at least 3 years of experience. A combination of a priori and open coding was used to support thematic analyses. Key themes included (a) intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs; (b) building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs; (c) communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding; and (d) creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork. Key findings indicated that principals should focus on building trusting relationships, providing clear and consistent communication, differentiating supports for new teachers and for tenured teachers, acting honestly, building rapport, and enhancing teamwork/collaboration to create specific teacher retention strategies in the elementary school setting. Recommendations included preparation and ongoing professional development for school leaders so elementary school principals can apply the specific strategies to increase teachers' job satisfaction, and thus, cultivating positive social change through teacher retention. Principals will be able to offer equity to students by staffing every classroom with quality teachers.

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Dedication

My doctoral dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Lauretta Barnes; my daughter, Sydney Gregory; and my husband Dwayne Gregory. You are my rock! I love each of you and thank God for you.

To my late grandmother, Estelle Halley Hursey, lovingly known as "Ma", I know that you are singing His praises!

Acknowledgments

To God be the glory! A special thank you to the wonderful people who supported me in remaining steadfast in my pursuit to complete my research study. To my adored husband, daughter, and mother, I am so appreciative for your patience, encouragement, and self-sacrifice. A special thank you to my amazing committee members. I am grateful for your unwavering guidance. To my chair, Dr. Shereeza Mohammed, affectionately known as "Dr. M", thank you for your wisdom, ongoing words of inspiration and wit. Without your guidance and support, I would not have reached my goal. To my second chair Dr. Karen Hunt, thank you for supporting me by sharing your methodological expertise. Thank you to my URR, Dr. Tina Dawson, for your leadership in providing oversight in the development and implementation of the AEAL FastTrack, Ed.D. program. Finally, to my relatives, friends, and colleagues, thank you for your support and encouraging words.

Hebrews 10:36 - "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

It always seems impossible until it's done. – Nelson Mandela

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Over the past 4 decades, retaining educators within schools in the United States who are prepared to educate a diverse student population has been a challenge (Faremi, 2017; Toropova et al., 2021). Faremi (2017) identified an increased concern throughout the educational system related to effective teacher retention. This increase was due to a surge in the number of teachers leaving the field of education, despite various recruitment and retention strategies (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). This, coupled with the dwindling pool of teachers, was concerning as from 2008 to 2016 there was a 15.4% decline in the number of education degrees completed and a 27.4% drop in people completing teacher education programs (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that of the 90% of teachers who leave the classroom, approximately two thirds leave because of frustration with teaching. Moreover, job safety and security were noted as being directly aligned to teacher commitment and performance (Faremi, 2017). To that end, Hughes et al. (2014) explained that principal support of teachers is critical in inspiring educators and vital in promoting teacher retention.

The aforesaid concern was additionally prevalent within a large urban-suburban public school district in the Eastern United States. According to the Department of Human Resources Recruitment and Staffing for said district, data over the past 3 school years revealed that 7.6% of teachers left the school system in 2015, 9.2% in 2016, and 9% in 2017. Therefore, this study has value as it may aid in providing school principals with specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. Grissom and Bartanen (2018) explained that the quality of a school administrator, specifically the

principal, is a predictor of whether a teacher continues their tenure within the school. Through the school improvement process Grissom and Bartanen (2018) noted that strategic retention of teachers yields higher growth in student achievement. Therefore, it is imperative that schools retain quality teachers to support the learning trajectory for students. As an outcome, the potential positive social change will provide school-based principals with specific strategies to retain quality teachers, thus positively influencing student achievement. This study may also yield positive outcomes for the local school district. The target district showed a decrease in teacher retention from 2015-2016. With the data remaining stagnant and the possibility of the data reflecting a downward trend based on system-wide qualitative data, the implementation of the specific strategies for teacher retention are needed. Garcia and Weiss (2019) expounded on this topic and noted that the teacher shortage was real, vast, and increasing at a rate worse than ever expected. To retain effective teachers who have a strong skillset to support all students through the use of specific teacher retention strategies, social change would result from providing equity to students with quality teachers in every classroom, in every school.

## Background

In this study, research literature focused on teacher retention. I used Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership as a basis in determining how job satisfaction and positive work attitudes yielded teacher retention in the elementary school setting. High attrition and a dwindling pool of applicants were the two most troubling dynamics of the education labor market; they were largely driving the teacher shortage and hence were largely responsible for the costs and consequences of the teacher

shortage (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017; Ingersoll 2004, 2014; Sutcher et al., 2016). The

lack of teacher retention also depresses student achievement (Darling-Hammond 1999;

Ladd & Sorensen 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), especially in our highest-poverty schools,

with "turnover-induced loss of general and grade-specific experience" (Garcia & Weiss,

2019, p. 4) as the main driver of declining student achievement (Hanushek et al., 2016;

Sorensen & Ladd, 2018).

The gap in practice existed in the field of education in determining specific

strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. A link existed between

principals' support and teacher retention (Shaw & Newton, 2014). However, the literature

lacked specific retention strategies that revealed success in teacher preservation.

Consequently, in order to retain teachers in the elementary school setting, specific

strategies warranted identification.

Net turnover increases a school's share of inexperienced teachers who are not

fully certified or credentialed to teach the subject to which they are assigned, and

turnover begets further turnover, substantially weakening the overall quality and ability

of the school's teacher pool (Sorensen & Ladd, 2018). Consequently, this study was

necessary to determine specific strategies to retain quality teachers to support the learning

trajectory for students.

**Problem Statement**

The problem was that there was a lack of teacher retention strategies in the

elementary school setting in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United

States. More specifically, teachers have reported an increase in job satisfaction when

school leadership was positive and administrative best practices were implemented, thus

supporting teacher retention (Glennie et al., 2016). Additionally, lower rates of teacher

turnover have been noted in schools where there was strong leadership, increased teacher

autonomy, and purposeful professional development (Glennie et al., 2016). However,

little was known about strategies for retaining teachers that principals use. The gap in

practice was in determining specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary

school setting. McIntosh et al. (2016) explained that the retention of quality teachers is a

key component of enhancing student achievement. Abitale et al. (2019) expounded by

sharing that teaching is a challenging profession and that teachers leave for many

reasons; therefore, school leaders must be equipped with specific retention strategies.

Abitale et al. further explained that there are data to support why teachers leave the

classroom, but limited information on retention strategies. To that end, Abitale et al. felt

it necessary to work collaboratively to discuss strategies they were using to support

teacher retention. Ansley et al. (2019) additionally explained the significance of school

leaders committing to strengthening their practices in the field of education to influence

the problematic teacher shortage.

Staffing schools nationwide with quality teachers is imperative in producing

globally competitive students (Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). According to Shaw

and Newton (2014), there is a link between principal support and teacher retention,

whereby teachers who receive an increased level of principal support have a higher

chance of staying in the field. Principal support for teachers, or the lack thereof, affects

teachers' decisions to stay or leave the profession in a specified school, overriding even

salary considerations (Podolsky et al., 2016). Principal support has been discussed in extensive terms in the literature (Shaw & Newton, 2014). However, it is imperative that teachers receive the kind of support that inspires them to keep teaching (Hughes, 2012). Understanding specific retention strategies used to keep teachers is important for school-based principals as it provides consistency and sustainability in teaching and learning (McIntosh et al., 2016).

Although research findings substantiate that principal support is the key factor in retaining teachers, researchers have not been explicit in detailing the specific strategies that principals can employ to retain teachers. Principals understand the link between teacher gratification and teacher retention and use this knowledge to support the sustainability of high-quality teachers (Shaw & Newton, 2014). Nonetheless, the literature lacked information regarding specific retention strategies that revealed success in teacher preservation. This study addressed the gap in practice aligned to determining specific retention strategies that support the maintenance of teachers in the elementary school setting. Grissom and Bartanen (2018) explained that principals have an exceptionally hard job of retaining teachers and often have to get creative and stay nimble to build a school community where teachers stay. Moreover, Podolsky et al. (2016) noted that, to retain teachers, school leadership strategies are a critical component to retention and must be devised to support teachers. Likewise, Faremi (2017) noted that leadership structures in educational institutions determine the level of teaching and teacher retention; thus, specific strategies must be employed to support teachers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine specific strategies used by principals for retaining teachers at elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. To support teachers in the multilayered tasks related to teaching and learning, principals must be a resource for teachers (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). Optimized student performance for all students is the ultimate goal for teachers. Thus, supporting teachers through the implementation of specific retention strategies provides them with consistency and positively affects students (Shaw & Newton, 2014). Through interviewing principals in this case study, I posed questions aligned to how the specific strategies are related to teacher retention in their schools. Although the literature was inclusive of research findings to substantiate that principal support is the key factor in retaining teachers, researchers have not been explicit in detailing the specific supports (Podolsky et al., 2016). More precisely, Brown and Wynn (2007) noted the pivotal role school principals play in the phenomenon of teacher retention, thus providing collaboration and opportunities to learn from each other. However, the absence of specific retention strategies presented a gap in the literature and in practice which this study investigated.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative case study addressed three central research questions:

RQ1: What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting?

RQ2: What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools did the principals identify?

RQ3: What leadership behaviors did principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting?

### Conceptual Framework

I created the conceptual framework for this study using two theories related to teachers and principals and their interactions. One component was Herzberg's (1966) motivation-hygiene theory. Motivational theories have been used to explain the attitudes and behaviors of employees (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). More specifically, motivational theories are based on the assumption that a relationship exists between individual needs that inspire actions and behaviors (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). In Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, otherwise known as Herzberg's two-factor theory, achievement is the highest motivator, above money, promotion, and recognition. Additionally, Lucas (1985) noted that the relationship between a supervisor and the employee was an important factor in work satisfaction (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). The various aspects of Herzberg's theory affect different dimensions of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is the feeling an employee develops regarding job fulfillment, thus forming an attitude about the work.

The aspect of motivation reflects the factors that inspire personnel to work. In Herzberg's theory, motivators include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, growth, and the work itself (see Table 1). Conversely, hygiene factors do not provide satisfaction; they prevent dissatisfaction (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011).

Hygiene factors include organizational commitments, supervision, relationships with supervisors and peers, work conditions, salary, status, and security (see Table 1). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory supports the premise that school principals are a key component to keeping teachers inspired to yield success in their classrooms.

**Table 1**

*Herzberg's Hygiene-Motivation Theory*

| Motivators | Hygiene Factors |
| --- | --- |
| Achievement | Organizational Commitments |
| Recognition | Supervision |
| The Work Itself | Relationships |
| Responsibility | Work Conditions |
| Advancement | Salary |
| Growth | Status |
| | Security |

*Note.* Adapted from "Word and the Nature of Man." by F. I. Herzberg, 1966.

https://www.learnmanagement2.com/herzberg.htm

The aforesaid premise directly aligns to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, as the satisfaction that teachers feel on the job is the goal and precursor to teacher retention. Under Herzberg's (1966) theory, employees who are content with motivation and hygiene factors demonstrate top job performance, thus inspiring them in their field of work (Herzberg, 1966). When teachers reach their goal of increased satisfaction in the workplace as a result of the retention strategies implemented by school principals, the teachers are more likely to be retained.

In this study, the focus was on determining specific retention strategies used by principals in the elementary school setting to retain teachers. To uncover retention strategies school principals found most operative in supporting teachers, I used

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as the foundation for the interview questions. The authentic experiences that school principals shared provided an understanding of the implemented best practices related to motivation and hygiene used and how they promote job satisfaction for teachers and thereby retain them.

Using Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as a component of the conceptual framework, I formulated two research questions that explored the motivational and hygiene strategies principals used to retain teachers. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory was used to develop the interview questions in the data collection for this study. Then, I analyzed the data in terms of existing and emerging themes related to this theory. Characteristics of job satisfaction appear in the form of achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, growth, and the work itself. Hygiene factors appear in the form of company policies, supervision, relationships with supervisors and peers, work conditions, salary, status, and security. When the participants' responses aligned with both types of factors, the existing themes in the framework were highlighted. However, new elements that the participants indicated in their interviews indicated emerging themes.

In addition to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, this study took into consideration the theory of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is the ability of a leader to inspire followers to be committed to change based on a need. First introduced by Burns in 1978, then extended by Bass in 1985, transformational leadership theory holds that when followers of a leader feel trust, respect, and allegiance for that leader, they are apt to align with the vision and mission of the leader (Bass &

Riggio, 2006). More specifically, transformational leaders motivate followers through four components of leadership behaviors and style: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Four Is of Transformational Leadership*

| Component | Definition |
|---|---|
| Idealized influence | Leaders serve as an ideal role model for followers and is admired for this (demonstrates a high level of ethical behavior and instills pride in the followers). |
| Inspirational motivation | Transformational leaders have the ability to inspire and motivate followers (communicates effectively; thus, allowing the followers to understand the vision). |
| Individual consideration | Transformational leaders demonstrate genuine concerns for the needs and feelings of followers which brings out the best efforts from each individual (acts as a mentor or coach to support the followers). |
| Intellectual stimulation | Transformational leaders challenge followers to be innovative and creative (encourages followers to take risks and think deeply about advancements). |

*Note.* Adapted from "Principals and Assumptions – Issues in ICT in ED (Fall) 2016," https://sites.google.com/site/issuesinictinedfall2016lmunet/big-ideas/effecting-transformational-leadership/priniciples-and-assumptions

According to Kouni et al. (2018), there is a strong relationship between job satisfaction or positive work attitude and leadership. This translates in the school setting to a positive state of being for teachers that contributes to their job satisfaction (Kouni et al., 2018). As noted by Lee (2018), principals should strive to employ a transformational leadership style that supports teachers and creates job satisfaction that ultimately promotes the retention of teachers.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, or two-factor theory, and transformational leadership grounded this study as each theory provided motivational components that

support job satisfaction. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory encompassed a focus on intrinsic conditions of the job or motivators and extrinsic factors to the work known as hygiene factors (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Transformational leadership theory espoused that when the followers of a leader feel trust, respect, and allegiance for a leader, they willingly align with the vision and mission of the leader (Bass & Riggio, 2014). Therefore, coupling Herzberg's motivation-hygiene with transformational leadership theory formed a framework that supported the implementation of strategies that motivate teachers, provide teachers with job satisfaction, and promote allegiance to their principal and the organization.

The transformational leadership theory added an educational component to the conceptual framework when joined with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Specifically, Kouni et al. (2018) noted that research data reflect that transformational leadership has a positive impact on school conditions, including teachers' job satisfaction and student performance. Transformational leadership directly connected to the purpose of this study as it supported the power of school principals to influence the work motivation of teachers, thus keeping them in the classroom and in the field of education. The four elements of the transformational leadership theory (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation) in this study were the focus of research question number three aligned to the aspects of leadership behaviors that principals used to retain teachers in the elementary setting. The data collection tool in this study consisted of semistructured interview questions that were directly aligned to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational

leadership theory. The components of the conceptual framework allowed the data analysis to focus on the effect of the theories, the phenomenon of the behaviors, and the actions of principals who work to retain teachers. This data analysis ensured that the findings were aligned with themes from the two theories while allowing for new themes to emerge.

## Nature of the Study

A qualitative case study approach was selected for this study. Through the use of a qualitative method, individuals' lives and experiences are examined in relation to a phenomenon being studied (Dawidowicz, 2016). Qualitative research methods are used to examine and analyze phenomenon under normal conditions and the natural effects on participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research is based on digging deeper to better understand how people think about, interact with, and understand aspects of life and the world around them. When studying educational problems, qualitative research provides social context and authentic experiences that people bring to what is being studied (Laureate Education, 2015). Qualitative research focuses on generating meaning and understanding through rich description (Yin, 2015).

There are several qualitative approaches, such as phenomenology, ethnography, narrative model/approach, and case study. Phenomenology's focus is on the commonalities of a lived experience (Lambert, 2012). Lambert (2012) noted that ethnographic research is centered on describing a culture in a naturalistic context. The narrative model/approach of research occurs over a lengthy period of time and tells the story of opportunities and obstacles as they relate to influences (Lambert, 2012). The case

study expounds on an organization, company, or individual and can be explanatory in describing an event (Lambert, 2012). Yin (2015) noted that when referencing qualitative approaches within individual disciplines or professions, each term indicates a large body of research with a variety of highly contrasting methods. To that end, for this study, phenomenology was not suitable because it serves to understand a person's experience as opposed to how the experience influenced a particular situation. Ethnography was additionally not appropriate for this study as the focus is on the researcher observing participants in their authentic environment; thus, observation would not yield specific retention strategies. Furthermore, the narrative approach usually involves a small number of participants (e.g., one or two) and creates a story based on a persona (e.g., an assumed identity or a character). The narrative approach is also known to consist of interviews conducted over a lengthy period of time (Yin, 2016). Therefore, the narrative approach was not fitting for this study as the goal was to conduct a deep investigation of a phenomenon in an authentic context, not create a story based on a persona.

Although each of the aforementioned approaches would have allowed data to emerge organically, for this investigation a qualitative case study provided opportunities for interviews to be conducted to address the manner in which principals used specific retention strategies in their elementary schools. The principals in this investigation were from the same local education agency in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States.  A qualitative case study provides the researcher an opportunity to conduct interviews inclusive of authentic experiences, exploration, and individual views that allow the researcher to understand the perspectives of others (Saldaña, 2016).  Case

studies are commonly used to document and analyze implementation processes and the outcomes of interventions (Yin, 2016). To that end, I used the case study approach to determine which teacher retention strategies principals have implemented and noted as effective.

Conversely, a quantitative study is based on measurable factors that seek to determine how much, how many, or how frequently a factor occurs (Babbie, 2017). In this study, the authentic experiences of principals were examined to determine specific teacher retention strategies. More specifically, I analyzed the reported behaviors and actions of principals who work to retain teachers. An additional outcome reflected the central role school principals play in the phenomenon of teacher retention. Therefore, principals were interviewed as participants. To that end, a qualitative method was most appropriate because it provided an in-depth account of what principals deem as strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. I collected data from eight principals, using interview questions aligned to two theories. Data were analyzed by looking for codes and themes that were preexisting within the framework (e.g., motivation/hygiene factors and 4Is of transformational leadership). Saldaña (2016) noted that when analyzing qualitative data, coding can be used to capture meaning or features through words or phrases. Therefore, new and emerging patterns and themes were considered as data were analyzed for this study. In short, a qualitative study allowed for principal interviews to be conducted that produced genuine actionable teacher retention strategies.

**Definitions**

In alignment with this qualitative study, the authors of key studies defined the following terms:

*Achievement*: becoming the most that one can be (Tan, 2013).

*Administrative*: the operator of an academic institution (Hughes, 2015).

*Advancement*: promotion opportunities (Tan, 2013).

*Growth*: opportunity for advancement/progression (Tan, 2013).

*Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theor*y: Also known as the two-factor theory; certain factors in the workplace promote job satisfaction; conversely, some factors cause dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966).

*Organizational commitments*: working hours and personal time (Tan, 2013).

*Recognition*: esteem, status, strength (Tan, 2013).

*Relationships*: connections between co-workers and supervisors; work group interactions and co-workers' support (Tan, 2013).

*Responsibility*: accountability of an important job (Tan, 2013).

*Salary*: financial compensations for work performance (Tan, 2013).

*Security*: stable work environment; support with students (e.g., behavioral supports; Tan, 2013).

*Status*: rank in relation to others (Tan, 2013).

*Supervision*: a relationship between leader-member interactions; the coordinative relationship in terms of trust, confidence, and respect between leaders and followers (Tan, 2013).

*Teacher retention*: the ability to keep teachers in schools (Abitabile et al., 2019).

*Teacher turnover*: teacher attrition; teachers leaving a school, school system, or the profession (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018; Young, 2018).

*The Work Itself*: creative and challenging work; participation in decisions making; job flexibility and autonomy (Tan, 2013).

*Transformational leadership*: a leadership approach in which a leader determines an area warranting change and creates positive change in followers (Lee, 2018).

*Work conditions*: the balance between employees' working hours and personal time; ranked as the most important among other motivation and hygiene factors (Tan, 2013)

## Assumptions

Assumptions are unexamined beliefs that are formed without proof (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Five assumptions were made when establishing this study. The most important assumption was that the principals were telling the truth from their perspective. I also assumed that the principal participants were grounded in leadership work and wanted to effect positive social change in alignment with the global teacher shortage epidemic. Next, it was assumed that the principals participating in the study had an increased level of awareness related to specific retention strategies that support the maintenance of teachers in their school. Having experience in applying strategies to specifically retain teachers was a participation requirement for this study as it was the key purpose of the interviews. Additionally, it was assumed that certain motivators were aligned to teacher retention and could positively influence the retention rate of teachers.

The conceptual framework (Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership) for this study was aligned to motivators; thus, it was assumed that key components of job satisfaction would emerge. Furthermore, it was assumed that once the themes emerged from the study, the strategies would act as best practices in all settings. Job satisfaction is universal; therefore, it was assumed that the emerging themes could be applicable in other settings. Finally, it was assumed that the principals participating in the interviews did not feel coerced, as it was my responsibility to ensure that they understood that participation was voluntary. Principals should have felt comfortable in the process and willing to provide authentic and candid responses without retribution. These assumptions were pertinent to the context of this study as they supported the notion that if the correct teacher retention strategies were identified, they could be transferred to other schools and thus widely affect teacher retention.

**Scope and Delimitations**

Little was known about specific strategies for retaining teachers that principals used in the large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. The gap in practice was in determining specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. The conceptual framework for this study focused on two theories: Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership theory. These theories were selected due to each theory's philosophy around job satisfaction. Maslow's theory of motivation, also known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, was additionally considered for this study. However, Maslow's theory focuses on basic needs and does not take into consideration the aspect of job satisfaction.

The population for this study included principals from elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. Eight elementary principals were recruited to participate. Principals from the middle and high school levels were excluded as the focus for this study was exclusively on elementary schools. Since teaching is a global profession and retention is universally needed, it was assumed that the results could be transferred to other elementary schools.

The focus for this study was chosen due to the surge in the number of teachers leaving the field of education, despite various recruitment and retention strategies (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Specifically, within a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States, 7.6% of teachers left the school system in 2015, 9.2% in 2016, and 9% in 2017. To that end, this study was warranted to elicit data to determine strategies for retaining teachers at these elementary schools.

Delimitations in a qualitative study are the explicit features of the research and reflect boundaries set for the design of the study (Saldaña, 2016). The purpose of this study was ultimately to enhance student achievement through the retention of elementary school teachers. Over the course of my research study, the United States reported a teacher shortage of over 110,000 (Hodge, 2019). Hodges (2019) explained that teacher retention had been a concern since the early 1970s. Moreover, the concern still exists and has been exacerbated over the years. Hodges additionally noted that a recent study conducted by Gallup explained that the number one concern among school principals was the recruitment and retention of teachers.

To improve retention of elementary school teachers, specific retention strategies used by principals in the elementary school setting were elicited through this study. The boundaries of this study were inclusive of elementary principals with 3 or more years of tenure in leading schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. Principals from middle and high schools were not included in the study. Early childhood centers (e.g., schools only housing programs for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old students) and special schools (e.g., only serving students with special education needs) were also excluded from this study. This study was inclusive of principals practicing from various schools (e.g., Title I, Blue Ribbon, schools offering special education cluster programs, etc.). Only elementary school principals participated; assistant principals were excluded. Schools in the district in the Eastern United States were classified as being in an urban-suburban location. Therefore, responses from principals from rural areas are absent from the study.

According to Burkholder et al. (2016), transferability is the application of a qualitative study to other situations. To establish transferability in this study, I interviewed a variety of elementary school principals leading schools with varying demographics, socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and programming. Burkholder et al. explained that the researcher should ensure that evidence (e.g., sufficient description of the setting and the assumptions of the study) is included in the study, thus allowing the reader to make informed decisions about the application of findings to other contexts. Therefore, this study's findings may be applied to other schools with similar contextual elements.

**Limitations**

Limitations are the potential design or methodological weaknesses that can influence the understanding of the research findings (Yin, 2015). This research was limited to only elementary principals. Assistant principals were not selected to participate in this study as they assist the principal and are often busy completing tasks that do not allow them to focus on teacher retention efforts. The justification for this limitation was that the principal is the top leader in the school and creates the culture and climate for teachers. Moreover, principals are responsible for teacher retention by school district leaders. The limitation was that there was only one lens through which data were captured from each of the schools participating.

As an outcome of this study, determining specific principal retention strategies in the elementary school setting was the goal. Therefore, having the leader of the school understand the best practices that could be implemented to support teacher retention was pertinent. The principal is responsible for overseeing all aspects within the schoolhouse and employing teacher retention strategies that provide consistency for students. During the interviews, I asked questions regarding each principal's teacher retention rate and leadership style.

Yet another limitation of this research study in relation to transferability was the lack of transferability of the findings to the middle and high school levels. Nonetheless, the findings can be transferred to other similar elementary schools. As previously noted, because this study took place in an urban-suburban area, transferability to rural areas is limited.

One set of factors that could possibly influence the study's outcome is the gender, age, or race of the principals. Therefore, this demographic element was considered, and a diverse sample of principals were invited to participate in the interviews.

## Significance

To identify specific teacher retention strategies, interviews were used to ascertain what strategies the principal participants were using to retain teachers in their elementary school. The original contribution to the literature reflected that principal support of teachers is critical in inspiring educators and vital in promoting teacher retention (Hughes et al., 2014). The findings in this case study will effect positive social change as it will aid principals in retaining teachers in their schools and in the field of education.

The study provides principals with specific retention strategies to better support and retain teachers. Retaining teachers stabilizes the changing nature in the school culture and builds organizational knowledge and continuous collaborative efforts such as professional learning communities (PLCs). The strength of teacher retention additionally encourages a more cohesive approach since there is not a continuous set of new teachers to become acculturated to the school. Such stability can help schools progress to meet their goals, one of which is to positively influence student learning and achievement.

Teachers, school principals, and students will benefit from the findings of this research that will potentially produce positive social change. Teachers will benefit as they will have the support needed to carry out their teaching duties. Additionally, through dissemination of the findings of identified specific strategies for retaining teachers, all principals have the potential to be successful in increasing teacher retention.

**Summary**

Retaining quality teachers is a key component to enhancing student achievement (McIntosh et al., 2016). There is a need for research regarding specific teacher retention strategies in the elementary school setting within a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. Little was known about specific strategies for retaining teachers that principals used. The gap in practice was in determining specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine administrative strategies for retaining teachers in elementary schools. Two theories that compose the conceptual framework, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership, were explored. This study's findings contribute to the literature by addressing the need to retain teachers in the elementary school setting through the implementation of successful retention strategies.

In the next chapter, I explore relevant literature focused on teacher retention motivators. Specifically, the key topics in the literature review are Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, transformational leadership, and the role of the principal in teacher retention. A review of the literature was conducted to see what behaviors and practices have been recommended as successful for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teacher retention has continued to be a challenge in elementary schools in the United States. The gap in practice that this study addressed is a lack of specific leadership behaviors and practices that enhance teacher retention in elementary school settings. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain how principals described their strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. While research findings validate that administrative support is the key factor in retaining teachers, researchers have not clearly detailed specific administrative strategies for retaining teachers.

Administrators understand that increased teacher gratification results in increased teacher retention (Callahan, 2016). Yet, the literature has been vague in detailing specific retention strategies that highlight success in teacher support. This study addressed specific administrative retention strategies that support the retention of teachers in the elementary school setting.

In this chapter, I explore scholarly articles related to administrative strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools. Particularly, articles related to motivators, hygiene factors, job satisfaction, leadership, administrative supports, and the impact of teacher retention on student achievement are discussed. The major sections of the literature review address the following: (a) literature search strategy, (b) the conceptual framework of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership, (c) review of the literature, and (d) the summary of the significant findings.

**Literature Search Strategy**

I retrieved the literature in this review from online databases, mostly through

Walden University's Thoreau Multi-Database Search. The scholarly resources used

included Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, Education Source, Education Commission of

the States, SAGE Journals, and SocINDEX with Full Text. The majority of the references

are peer-reviewed journals published between 2015 and 2020. The search of the

databases focused on publications that included the related key terms: *teacher retention,*

*teacher attrition, motivators, principal leadership, job satisfaction, Herzberg's*

*motivation-hygiene theory,* and *transformational.* The iterative search process was

limited to sources published within the past 5 years. Although most of the resources

included in the literature review were retrieved from the Walden University's Thoreau

Multi-Database, I also conducted a chain search using Google Scholar with an emphasis

on cited works. Key terms such as *job satisfaction for teachers*, *transformational*

*leadership and its impact*, and *teacher retention* were used to identify literature that was

germane to the study. All scholarly articles were written in English. I read each article

aligned to the research study as it was located. I then read each of these articles a second

time and completed annotations to determine the relevance, methodology, and quality of

the study. Ongoing reading occurred until the point of saturation in addressing this study.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study comprised two theories: Herzberg's

motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership. These theories supported the

research questions and aligned with the problem statement. This conceptual framework

and foundation for this study aided in synthesizing the literature to explain the

phenomenon of the behaviors and actions of principals who work to retain teachers.

**Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory, states

that certain factors in the workplace promote job satisfaction; conversely, some factors

prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). More specifically, Herzberg's research included

interviews with individuals to determine circumstances in which they felt exceptionally

good or bad about their jobs (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Herzberg's work supporting

the two-factor theory is built from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1954) and

McClelland's needs theory (1961) in which they focused on the premise that people are

motivated based on their individual needs (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011).

Collectively, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is composed of two factors

that delineate the tenets of the theory: motivators and hygiene factors. *Motivators* develop

from intrinsic conditions of the job, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility,

advancement, growth, and the work itself and produce positive satisfaction (Teck-Hong

& Waheed, 2011). *Hygiene factors* conversely are extrinsic to the work and appear in the

form of organizational commitment, supervision, relationships with peers and

supervisors, work conditions, salary, status, and security.

**Table 3**

*Motivators and Hygiene Factors*

| Motivators | Hygiene Factors |
|---|---|
| **Achievement**: becoming the most that one can be (Tan, 2013) | **Organizational commitments**: working hours and personal time (Tan, 2013) |
| **Recognition**: esteem, status, strength (Tan, 2013) | **Supervision**: a positive relationship between leader-member interactions; the coordinative relationship in terms of trust, confidence, and respect between leaders and followers, (Tan, 2013) |
| **The Work Itself**: creative and challenging work; participation in decisions making; job flexibility and autonomy (Tan, 2013) | **Relationships**: a positive relationship between co-workers and supervisors; work group interactions and co-workers' support (Tan, 2013) |
| **Responsibility**: accountability of an important job (Tan, 2013) | **Work Conditions**: the balance between employees working hours and personal time; raked as the most important among other motivation and hygiene factors (Tan, 2013) |
| **Advancement**: promotion opportunities (Tan, 2013) | **Salary**: financial compensations for work performance (Tan, 2013) |
| **Growth**: opportunity for advancement/progression (Tan, 2013) | **Status**: rank in relation to others (Tan, 2013) |
| | **Security**: stable work environment (Tan, 2013) |

### *Job Satisfaction*

Teck-Hong and Waheed (2011) explained that job satisfaction is based on an emotional state inclusive of many factors related to work and the work environment. Furthermore, Teck-Hong and Waheed indicated that job satisfaction plays a major role in an individual's life (e.g., physical, mental, or social well-being). To that end, it is assumed that when employees are satisfied in the workplace, they will be more productive and their retention in the organization will last for an extended period (Lamb & Ogle, 2019).

Job satisfaction takes into consideration both satisfaction and dissatisfaction on a continuum in which the midpoint reflects neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Pinder, 2014). Thus, it is presumed that individuals adjust their position along the continuum based on the multifaceted aspects of the work. Additionally, Lamb and Ogle (2019) noted that

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory suggests that the factors that cause satisfaction are different than those that prevent dissatisfaction. More specifically, motivators are factors that inspire individuals to work and experience job satisfaction, while hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction (Pinder, 2014). Moreover, Lamb and Ogle explained that the two-factor theory reveals that achievement is rated as the highest motivator, while company policies and relationships with supervisors and peers rank high with hygiene factors.

### Teacher Motivation

In some research studies, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory reflects transferability in determining teacher motivation in the educational setting. Sajid et al. (2018) conducted a study on teacher motivation at the secondary level. In this study, a scale called the Sajid teacher motivation scale (STMS) was developed in which Herzberg's two-factor motivation-hygiene theory was implemented. Sajid et al. explained that motivators are intrinsic factors and hygiene factors are extrinsic factors of motivation. In this quantitative study, the findings reflected that the STMS was valid and reliable. Sajid et al. expounded on Herzberg's two-factor theory by developing a Likert type motivation scale to measure teacher motivation. The outcome of the study solidifies that the Likert scale modeled after the two-factor hygiene theory has transferability to other studies aligned to motivation in the school setting (Sajid et al., 2018).

### Retention Strategies

Understanding motivation techniques supports the identification of specific retention strategies. Ruiz (2017) conducted a study to explore effective strategies to retain culinary-educated millennial employees in a full-service restaurant. The population for

this study included millennials and supervisors at full-service restaurants in Denver,

Colorado. The sample size was 12 participants inclusive of nine millennials and three

supervisors. The conceptual framework was based on Herzberg's two-factor theory. A

qualitative methodology was used for this study as it provided participants' responses to

open-ended interview questions related to employee retention (Ruiz, 2017). Data were

collected using face-to-face semistructured interviews. Through coding the responses in

alignment with Herzberg's two-factor theory, themes associated with motivation and

hygiene factors emerged. More specifically, several effective strategies for retaining

culinary educated millennial-generation employees emerged. The data from the study

provided supervisors with strategies they could implement to increase retention. This

study's use of Herzberg's two-factor theory in conjunction with open-ended questions

could be applied to other settings, making evident the theory's adaptability.

Kotni and Karumuri (2016) expounded on the concept of retention strategies as

compared to Ruiz (2017) by conducting a study to identify the satisfiers and dissatisfiers

of the motivation techniques adopted in the retail sector amid salesmen as part of a

retention strategy. In this study, Herzberg's two-factor theory was applied using

salespersons. The study is unique in that it first consulted shop managers to determine

what motivational practices had been adopted in the shops. This provided a basis for the

researchers to craft their questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of a

demographic profile, a section on hygiene factors, and a section on motivation factors.

Using a five-point Likert scale, the salespersons responded to the questions aligned to the

hygiene and motivation factors. The Cronbach's alpha for the hygiene factors and

motivation factors sections determined that the sections were statistically reliable. The findings of the study revealed that retail salespersons were motivated by some hygiene factors (e.g., social security, working conditions, sales incentives, sales contests, and company policies and procedures). However, some hygiene factors did not motivate salespersons (e.g., daily allowances, reimbursement of sales expenses, yearly pay increase, and sales job security). Typically, Lamb and Ogle (2019) noted that hygiene factors are intended to prevent dissatisfaction, not promote satisfaction. However, the results from Kotni and Karumuri's study illustrate that hygiene factors may act as motivators among retail salespersons.

In some studies in other disciplines, the motivators aligned to Herzberg's two-factor theory are controversial in terms of what was expected from the theory. Fareed and Jan (2016) conducted a study using Herzberg's two-factor theory with bank officers. Fareed and Jan found that hygiene factors are significantly correlated with increased job satisfaction (e.g., relationship with supervisors, company policy, salary, social status, and working conditions); however, they additionally found that Herzberg's motivators had no relationship with job satisfaction. Similarly, Warrier and Prasad (2018) conducted a study with employees from the IT (information technology) sector. Data revealed that contrary to what is predicted by the theory, the hygiene factors play a significantly stronger role in predicting job satisfaction than motivators (Warrier & Prasad, 2018). Additionally, Wen et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate whether motivational and hygiene factors affect the job satisfaction of administrative staff in the telecommunication sector. One outcome of the study, contrary to what was expected based upon the tenets of the

motivation-hygiene theory, motivation and hygiene factors did not affect the job satisfaction of administrative staff due to their low salaries. It was noted that administrative staff in this study were mostly lower- to middle-level employees and shared the mindset of the famous proverb, "something is better than nothing" regarding their job satisfaction (Wen et al., 2018). These employees' low salaries rendered moot the potential benefits of the other motivational and hygiene factors.

Across multiple disciplines, Herzberg's two-factor theory yields favorable outcomes when the motivation-hygiene factors are implemented. However, some researchers have noted that all outcomes do not directly reflect that motivation-hygiene factors inspire job satisfaction (Fareed & Jan, 2016; Warrier & Prasad, 2018; Wen et al., 2018). To that end, this study further investigates motivation-hygiene factors in the educational setting and how they promote job satisfaction for teachers, thereby retaining them.

**Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership was initially introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and then extended by Bernard M. Bass in 1985. Transformational leadership embraces the theory that when the followers of a leader feel trust, respect, and allegiance for a leader, they are apt to align with the vision and mission of the leader (Bateh & Heyliger, 2014). Kouni et al. (2018) explained that transformational leadership is a contemporary leadership style with a focus on key personal traits that are nurtured and established by the leader, thus prompting others to follow.

In 1992, Leithwood adapted the principles of transformational leadership to the field of education. Transformational leadership is prevalent in the field of education, as research data reflects that it has a positive impact on school conditions including teachers' job satisfaction and student performance (Kouni et al., 2018). Moreover, Berkovich (2016) noted that, since the 1990s, transformational leadership has been widespread and noted for coinciding with effective school leadership that emphasizes change-oriented education to meet 21st century learning standards.

Transformational leadership encompasses four tenets, also known as the 4Is: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders that employ the components of transformational leadership exhibit the following characteristics: (a) leaders with idealized influence demonstrate a high level of ethical behavior and instill pride in their followers; (b) leaders with inspirational motivation communicate effectively, thus allowing the followers to understand their vision; (c) leaders with individual consideration act as a mentor or coach to support the followers; and (d) leaders with intellectual stimulation encourage followers take risks and think deeply about advancements (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The implementation of the tenets of transformational leadership creates a trusting bond between leader and follower. Musifudin et al. (2019) conducted a study on the effect of transformational leadership and trust on organizational commitment among teachers. Musifudin et al. explained that questions were centered on how transformational leadership and trust affect the commitment of teachers toward the organization. The

results from this study revealed that transformational leadership has a positive direct

influence on organizational commitment.

Berkovich (2016) explored the status of the transformational leadership theory in

the field of educational administration and provided an interpretative critique. It was

shared that although transformational leadership has shortcomings in the area of

falsifiability, it could be addressed beneficially (Berkovich, 2016). Along the same lines,

transformational leadership has proven its ability to positively influence teaching and

learning for educational administrations by revealing underdeveloped potential among

educators. Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (as cited in Berkovich, 2016) detailed several key

criticisms of transformational leadership within management studies including the lack of

a clear conceptual definition, confusion concerning behaviors with their effects, and

inadequate models of the outcomes and the effects based on moderators. However, the

researchers did not investigate whether these critiques were applicable to educational

administrations. Despite these shortcomings, Berkovich argued that transformational

leadership is valuable and important in educational administration.

Using transformational leadership theory an intersection of the 4Is and work

motivation is uncovered. Lee and Kuo (2018) conducted a quantitative study on the

relationship between elementary school principals' transformational leadership and

teacher work motivation. The population for this study included elementary teachers. Lee

and Kuo used a questionnaire to determine the factors related to principals'

transformational leadership and teachers' work motivation through the lens of elementary

teachers. The researchers used a full structural equation model to illustrate the

correlations between the 4Is of transformational leadership (e.g., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation) and factors of teacher motivation (work identification, work participation, work enjoyment, work self-evaluation, and work concentration). The results from this study illustrate that transformational leadership theory can be used to draw connections between the 4Is and work motivators in a variety of settings.

Through the lens of transformational leadership theory, practical strategies that school leaders can use to support the implementation of special education inclusion services have been identified (Murphy, 2018). Through leading with passion, enthusiasm, and inspiration, transformational leaders are able to successfully communicate with the whole school community (i.e., teachers, parents, and students) regarding positive perceptions of inclusion services (Murphy, 2018). Murphy designed a tool that details the school leadership's responsibilities and corresponding transformational leadership traits. More specifically, the alignment of school leadership roles and responsibilities directly reflect the 4Is of transformational leadership. In addition to the tool describing transformational leadership traits, Murphy developed a self-reflective survey based on the findings of Bass (1985); this survey can identify the areas of strengths needs of special education leadership and determine transformational leadership traits related to successful inclusion education programs. This survey is adaptable as it can be implemented in a variety of settings. Likewise, transformational leadership has been operationalized in this study through the implementation of the self-reflective survey and the incorporation of the 4Is in supporting special education inclusion services.

A study was conducted to determine the level of transformational leadership practices by school principals and to assess whether school culture affects the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational health (Arokiasamy, 2018). The population for this study consisted of secondary school teachers. Arokiasamy explained that to eliminate interview bias and give respondents privacy, self-administered surveys were used. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the transformational leadership model. Arokiasamy used transformational leadership as the independent variable, organizational health as the dependent variable, and school culture as the moderating variable. These three variables were addressed simultaneously. This study reflects the versatility of transformational leadership through the surveys completed with a focus on transformational leadership, organizational health, and school culture. These surveys can be used to evaluate the degree to which the components of the conceptual model are present within the school setting.

School leaders must have an assortment of leadership approaches that allow them to address varies situations aligned to teachers and school management. Rehman et al. (2019) explored school heads' perceptions of their own school leadership styles. The population for this study included head teachers. Each of the participants was known for their leadership. In this qualitative case study, semistructured interviews were conducted. As themes emerged from respondents, three types of leadership style were named: transformational, instructional, and moral. The respondents noted that they used transformational leadership to demonstrate a commitment to change in the school setting. They additionally used innovative, creative, and imaginative ideas to positively influence

their schools. One respondent stated "change is my mission. I try to bring change for the betterment of the students and for the betterment of all the stakeholders. A sense of satisfaction comes to me from [achieving the mission] change" (Rehman et al., 2019, p. 145). This directly reflects Berkovich's (2016) findings in noting that transformational leaders have a focus on committing to a shared vision, being an innovative problem solver, and coaching/mentoring others. Moreover, through interviews with participants, it was noted that some viewed leadership as change agent.

The goal of the transformational leadership style is to influence employee satisfaction. However, it is imperative to understand the employee impact through the lens of both the leader employee and subordinate employee. Bednarova et al. (2018) conducted a study on the characteristics of head nurses' leadership styles and their impact on patient satisfaction. More specifically, the study focused on identifying differences between the assessment of the transformational leadership style of head nurses and the perception of this style by junior nurses. In their conclusion, Bednarova et al. explained that subordinates' perceptions of the transformational style are important as they are looking through a different lens. It was noted that the perception of the implementation of the leadership style is different for the leader versus the staff member (Bednarova et al., 2018). Many studies confirm that transformational leadership influences employee efficiency in a positive way (Bass et al., 2003; Berkovich, 2016; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Lowe et al, 1996; Musifudin et al., 2019); however, Bednarova et al. noted that in their study, head nurses valued intellectual stimulation (e.g., encourages followers to take risks and think deeply about advancements) and emphasized efficiency and creativity.

Conversely, junior nurses valued idealized influence (e.g., demonstrating a high level of ethical behavior and instilling pride in the followers) in the form of a charismatic consistent role model as related to work performance (Bednarova et al., 2018). Bednarova et al. concluded by noting that leaders must motivate, inspire, and transform; however, they must know the individual employees' needs and wishes.

The findings of some studies in other disciplines on transformational leadership are not in alignment with what was expected from the theory. Towler (2019) described in an executive summary that the transformational leadership framework was noted as being relatively static. Findings in this executive summary revealed that technology advances and globalization are challenged by the transformational leadership framework; as a result, a more dynamic form of leadership is required for the 21st century (Towler, 2019). Towler further noted that the transformational leadership framework focuses on the leader-follower relationship but does not explain the variation between the leader and the follower.

**Aligning the Framework With the Study**

While most of the findings in educational literature align with Herzberg's two-factor theory and the transformational leadership theory, there have been some unexpected findings in studies in other disciplines such as business, banking, and the healthcare industry (Bednarova et al., 2018; Towler, 2019). Herzberg's two-factor theory and transformational leadership grounded this study as each theory provided motivation components that support job satisfaction. To that end, the conceptual framework has been used to discuss the phenomenon of the behaviors and actions of principals who work to

retain teachers. The contribution to the literature is the specific principal retention

strategies gleaned from the data.

**Table 4**

*Motivators aligned to 4Is*

| 4Is | Achievement | Recognition | Work Itself | Responsibility | Advancement | Growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Idealized influence | | X | | X | | |
| Inspirational motivation | X | | | X | | X |
| Individual consideration | X | X | X | | X | |
| Intellectual stimulation | X | X | X | X | X | X |

**Table 5**

*Hygiene Factors aligned to 4Is*

| 4Is | Organizational commitments | Supervision | Relationships | Work conditions | Salary | Status | Security |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Idealized influence | X | X | X | | X | | |
| Inspirational motivation | | X | | | | X | X |
| Individual consideration | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Intellectual stimulation | | X | | | | | |

To illustrate the alignment of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and

transformational leadership, Tables 4 and 5 map the overlap of the two theories. Yin

(2016) explained that the triangulation of theories allows the researcher to use more than

one theory in the interpretation of the phenomenon. To that end, the mapping of the two

theories provided a direct correlation between the motivators and hygiene factors to the

4Is of transformation leadership. This alignment aided in determining the emerging

themes and patterns gleaned from conducting the interviews and coding the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The mapping in Table 4 reveals four primary overlaps between motivators and the 4Is of transformational leadership. First, all motivators (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth) align to intellectual stimulation in the 4Is of transformational leadership. Consequently, all motivators encompass an attribute that promote leaders in challenging employees to be innovative and be risk-takers to advance (Bass, 1985). In this study, this is reflected in teachers thinking deeply about advancements within their classrooms or in alignment with their professional advancement. Second, achievement, recognition, the work itself, and advancement align to individual consideration in the 4Is of transformational leadership. More specifically, each of these motivators supports leaders in displaying genuine care for the needs and feelings of the follower (Bass, 1985). Third, motivators in the form of achievement, recognition, advancement, and growth each align to inspirational motivation and focus on leaders inspiring, motivating, and communicating with followers (Bass, 1985). Fourth, the motivators of recognition and responsibility both align to idealized influence and are displayed through leaders acting as a role model (Bass, 1985).

Table 5 reflects various intersections of the hygiene factors and the 4Is of transformational leadership. In examining the hygiene factors, the following areas of alignment were determined. First, six of the seven hygiene factors (organizational commitment, relationships, work conditions, salary, status, and security) align to individual consideration and the 4Is of transformational leadership. Thus, these six

factors encompass leadership features that focus on coaching, mentoring, and having a genuine concern for the followers (Bass, 1985). Second, four of the seven hygiene factors, including organizational commitments, supervision, status, and security, align to inspirational motivation. Accordingly, this alignment reflects that these hygiene factors support the need for leaders to communicate effectively and inspire others (Bass, 1985). Third, the hygiene factors of supervision, relationships, and salary contain aspects of idealized influence and address leaders demonstrating strong morals and instilling those values in the followers (Bass, 1985). Fourth, supervision and status were determined to align to individual consideration and emphasize followers taking risks (Bass, 1985).

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**</div>

The following review of the literature contains discussions of three themes related to specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. These themes are teacher retention, student achievement, and the effectiveness of principals. This section also contains a review of the methodological literature. These key concepts are explored in tandem with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership.

**Teacher Retention**

One of the most significant influences on student achievement is the quality of the classroom teacher (Ovenden-Hope et al., 2018). Therefore, retaining high quality teachers is essential for educational success (Ovenden-Hope et al., 2018). Regardless of whether the concept is referred to as "turnover, "attrition," or "leaving," schools are not bringing in the number of teachers required to sustain quality teaching (Ovenden-Hope et al.,

2018). Many studies look at how to recruit teachers, but few convey specific strategies for retaining teachers. With student achievement as the goal in supporting teacher retention, identifying retention strategies is a necessity.

There is currently a struggle to hire and retain teachers in U.S. schools. Garcia and Weiss (2019) explained the challenges schools have in staffing to ensure that every classroom is equipped with a teacher. Moreover, the study detailed the high number of public school teachers that are leaving the profession. According to the most recent data, 13.8% of teachers are either leaving their school or leaving teaching altogether (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Garcia and Weiss explained that school administrators must tackle working conditions and other factors that are causing teachers to quit (e.g., low pay, challenging school environment, dismal professional development support, recognition). The weak support that teachers receive coupled with the lack of societal respect for the profession are driving them away (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Garcia and Weiss continued by emphasizing that the crisis to hire and retain teachers is urgent and warrants comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

Similar to Garcia and Weiss (2019), Perryman and Calvert (2020) also examined the longstanding problem of teacher retention. This exploration probed to find what originally motivated teachers to teach and why they considered leaving the profession. Reasons noted for wanting to be a teacher included wanting to make a difference and help students achieve, being inspired by former teachers, and desiring to be creative in their work (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Conversely, the top reasons why teachers wanted to leave teaching included difficulty in gaining a work-life balance, increased workload,

feeling undervalued, and lack of support from the administration (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Like Garcia and Weiss, Perryman and Calvert raised the question of what can be done to arrest the trend of teacher attrition.

Teacher attrition and retention have been problematic, challenging and even wicked issues (Kelchtermans, 2017). Kelchtermans (2017) conducted a study that unpacked the meaning of teacher attrition and retention (e.g., the need to prevent good teachers from leaving the job for the wrong reasons) and detailed the challenges of teacher retention. Teacher attrition and retention are both a problem and a challenge (Ansley et al., 2019; Faremi, 2017; Garcia & Weiss; 2019; Kelchtermans, 2017). Kelchtermans explained that obtaining an understanding of why teachers either stay in or leave their profession would allow school administrators to address both attrition and retention simultaneously. To that end, Kelchtermans found that teachers leave the profession for a variety of reasons such as being unprepared to work with children or other teachers, having an increased workload, and not being supported by school administrators. Factors that support teachers in staying in teaching include mentoring programs, induction support for new teachers, and professional development opportunities (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Teacher retention is particularly critical in hard-to-staff schools (Holmes et al., 2019). Holmes et al. (2019) developed a report that addressed teacher retention through the lens of administrative effectiveness, involvement, and teachers' intrinsic motivations. It was noted that although teacher recruitment was a recognized issue facing school systems, teacher retention was an even larger threat to successful student achievement

(Holmes et al., 2019). Additionally, Holmes et al. highlighted that teachers who leave underperforming schools often do so because of the lack of principal effectiveness.

Parallel to Holmes et al. (2019), Hughes et al. (2015) conducted a study on teacher retention in hard-to-staff schools. More explicitly, the study examined the relationship between principal support and the retention of teachers in schools that service students who exhibit challenging emotional and behavioral problems. Brown and Wynn (as cited in Hughes et al., 2015) explained that the difficult conditions in which teachers have to serve students make the job less attractive in the already diminishing field of education. Findings from this study revealed that support from principals has a critical and important impact on teacher retention (Hughes et al., 2015). More specifically, Hughes et al. (2015) found that when principals provided emotional and environmental support (e.g., positive feedback, availability of the principal, backing the teacher in front of parents, visits to the classroom, and recognition of a job well done), teachers felt valued and were willing to stay in their challenging school setting. Nonetheless, Hughes et al. provided the following strategies that principals should use in order to retain teachers: (a) offer more curriculum/planning time to teachers, (b) increase the amount of positive feedback and recognition, (c) increase the professional development, and (d) ensure that schools have enough staff to meet the needs of students. Through this study, components of Herzberg's two-factor theory (e.g., recognition, achievement, and the work itself) and transformational leadership (e.g., instilling pride in the followers, inspiring and motivating followers, and demonstrating genuine concerns

for the needs and feelings of followers) were used in the development of specific strategies for retaining teachers.

The lack of specific teacher retention strategies in the elementary school setting was a gap in the literature. This gap in the literature at times places principals in a predicament in which they have multiple teacher vacancies that are hard to fill, thus negatively influencing the youngest learners (Holmes et al., 2019). As an outcome of the gap in the literature, principals' decision making is often skewed as they are often in a panic to recruit qualitied teachers (Holmes et al., 2019). Young (2018) and McIntosh et al. (2016) explained that the retention of quality teachers is a significant element in ensuring student achievement. Young further noted that educational leaders have a general understanding of why teachers leave and what should be done to keep them. Ruiz (2017), Young, Murphy (2018), and Rehman et al. (2019) identified global strategies that can be implemented to support teachers in the classroom setting. Examples include conducting meaningful professional development, providing the opportunity to remain in the grade level they are currently teaching, and creating a positive work environment. Even with the aforementioned universal teacher retention strategies being employed, teacher retention continued to be difficult. However, the literature provided a wealth of information related to motivators, hygiene factors, and leadership characteristics aligned to job satisfaction. As an outcome, what was still unknown about teacher retention strategies, especially in elementary school settings, was the strategies that best support the characteristics aligned to job satisfaction.

According to Callahan (2016) and Young (2018), in order to retain teachers in schools, administrative support is a necessity. Glennie et al. (2016) explained that when school leadership is positive and administrative support is present, teachers report increased job satisfaction and a high chance of remaining in the field of education. To that end, specific administrative retention strategies that support the maintenance of teachers in the elementary school setting are a necessity.

Teacher retention is the ability to keep educators teaching within schools (Abitabile et al., 2019). Retaining teachers in the field of education has become a problem (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). Solomonson and Retallick (2018) noted that the United States is amid a major teacher shortage. Solomonson and Retallick revealed that in the 2016-2017 school year, approximately 112,000 teacher positions were unfilled; the researchers also forecasted a need for an estimated 300,000 new teachers yearly through 2020 to account for attrition among current teachers. Young (2018) explained that in comparison to other occupations, teachers have a higher annual turnover rate, with new teachers more apt to leave the profession at the end of the first year. Darling-Hammond et al. (2016) explained that the teacher shortage is most prevalent in special education, mathematics, science, and bilingual education. Additionally, teacher shortages have been widespread in areas that contain students who are economically disadvantaged, have experienced childhood trauma, display off-task behaviors, or perform below grade level expectations (Ansley et al., 2019).

Researchers on teacher retention regularly look at various factors that motivate educators to stay in the school setting (e.g., sense of value, job satisfaction, principal self-

efficacy, and school climate). A teacher's decision to stay in or leave a school, school system, or the profession has been found to be directly correlated with a principal's effectiveness and school climate (Dahlkamp et al., 2017; Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Ansley et al. (2019) explained that the strongest determinant of teacher job satisfaction is the leadership practices of the principal. Furthermore, Ansley et al. noted that the following as leadership characteristics have been deemed effective in supporting teacher job satisfaction, leading to higher rates of retention: (a) consistent implementation of school procedures, (b) behavior management support, (c) ongoing communication including positive feedback, (d) teacher autonomy, (e) teacher collaboration in the decision-making process, (f) availability of resources, and (g) coaching and mentoring for new teachers.

Examining factors that support educators in staying in the school setting is essential (Park et al., 2019). Park et al. noted that the integration of transformational and instructional leadership allows principals to develop instructional supports. Principals' instructional supports include (a) a principal helping teachers with their instructional practices, (b) teachers feeling comfortable discussing instructional issues with the principal, and (c) principals empowering teachers to make decisions focused on teaching and learning (Park et al., 2019). The researchers outlined the following findings: (a) student achievement is directly influenced by the school mechanisms highlighted in this study, (b) principal support positively influences PLCs, and (c) teachers that receive stronger support from principals create a robust school climate (Park et al., 2019). Park et al.'s findings encompass components of both Herzberg's two-factor theory (e.g.,

recognition and growth) and transformational leadership (e.g., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation), with a great emphasis on the 4Is in transformational leadership.

Supports that aid teachers in staying in the classroom are significant (Reitman and Karge, 2019). The supports are needed due to current teacher shortages, low performing schools, an increasing number of English language learners, and a growing number of students requiring special education services (Reitman & Karge, 2019). According to Reitman and Karge, in order to close the achievement gap, principals need to ensure that all students have highly competent, skilled, and well-informed teachers. A synthesis of the supports found in this study reflected alignment to elements of Herzberg's two-factor theory and transformational leadership.

Retaining quality teachers is significant in promoting increased student achievement (Young, 2018). Young shared that in order to directly affect student achievement; principals need to support the retention of highly qualified effective teachers. Therefore, specific retention strategies that produce job satisfaction and yield a feeling of support are warranted. More specifically, Young detailed leadership strategies that can be implemented to support teacher retention. For example, providing teachers with purposeful, sustainable professional development increases their pedagogy and content knowledge, thus building their teaching capacity. Providing new teachers with additional support helps them adjust to the demands of the job and allows them to gain teaching experience while accessing resources. Supporting grade level teams by keeping them intact and allowing for collaboration through grade level planning provides

consistency in the delivery of instruction for students. Aligning class assignments with teacher certification provides opportunities for teachers to participate in PLCs. Offering leadership opportunities to teachers builds their teaching capacity and prepares them for advancement into leadership opportunities. Clean and safe school environments allow for organized workspaces. Finally, creating an open-door policy for teachers to ask questions as needed allows teachers to feel supported.

Similarly, Abitabile et al. (2019) noted that the following retention strategies are currently being employed by high school principals: (a) devoting lots of time to supporting new hires, (b) pairing a mentor with a new teacher, (c) providing a forum for teachers to vent and receive feedback from colleagues on teaching frustrations, and (d) being visible in classrooms and providing affirmation to teachers regarding their implantation of instructional practices. Yet, Grissom and Bartanen (2018) explained that even in the absence of specific strategies, principals can attain a higher teacher retention rate by establishing a school culture that incorporates increased expectations and ongoing teacher feedback.

With between 20% to 40% of teachers leaving teaching within the first five years of their careers, policymakers have worked to combat teacher turnover using induction and mentoring programs (Rondelt & McQueen, 2017). Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) investigated first year teachers to determine whether different kinds of induction supports predicted teacher turnover. Implications gleaned from this study reflect that there is a link between induction supports and teacher retention (Rondelt & McQueen, 2017). More specifically, Ronfeldt and McQueen identified that supports such as mentoring programs,

beginning seminars, supportive communication from school leadership, and collaborative planning time yielded greater teacher retention.

Ovenden-Hope et al. (2018) also conducted a study on an early career teacher retention program titled RETAIN. The population for this study consisted of 10 teachers from nine schools. Semistructured telephone interviews were conducted. The RETAIN program focused on teachers of early childhood learners (ages 5-7). The aim of the program was to retain new teachers in their first three years of teaching. A key component of the program focused on developing PLCs. Ovenden-Hope et al. explained that expert teachers need support, professional development, time, and resources to perfect their craft. Ovenden-Hope et al. shared that specific aspects of the RETAIN PLC included a shared vision, trusting relationships, supportive and effective leadership, a genuine culture of collaboration, timely responses to questions and challenges, cycles of professional support, a focus on results, and a genuine commitment to sharing knowledge outside of the PLC. As a result of the study, Ovenden-Hope et al. explained that the participants' responses reflected indicators of positive outcomes. Specifically, the program increased participants' ability to work collaboratively and improved their confidence in the implementation of classroom practices (Ovenden-Hope et al., 2018). These results were an outcome of the close alignment between the design and delivery of the RETAIN program. The use of PLCs is a key component in this program and aligns to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory of building. Thus, PLCs in alignment with Herzberg's theory can be used to improve teacher retention.

**Student Achievement**

In an era where educational initiatives are designed to prepare students for meaningful 21st century learning through increased rigor of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum, teacher retention is paramount (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Young (2018) explained that the lack of teacher retention in schools causes lower student achievement. Dahlkamp et al. (2017) further noted that low teacher retention adversely affects school climate, the district's budget, and teaching and learning. Conversely, Pedota (2015) explained that there is a significant correlation between increased student achievement and teacher self-efficacy, thus leading to retention.

Teachers have the arduous task of ensuring that students are able to meet the challenging demands of standards that require analysis and application of content (Pedota, 2015). Pedota additionally noted that student attainment of the standards is known as student achievement. Student achievement is demonstrated when students exhibit their understanding of the standards taught through daily lessons (Pedota, 2015). When students experience difficulty with learning specific concepts, differentiated instruction (an instructional approach implemented to meet the varying needs of students) is used (Pedota, 2015). However, in a time where teacher retention is sparse, larger class sizes are a constraint, and the limited number of veteran teachers influences stability within the school, student achievement is influenced negatively (Young, 2018). Pedota expounded by noting that teachers who were given the autonomy to use intrinsic and extrinsic motivation techniques to positively influence students' academic achievement were content, worked harder, and stayed in the field of education.

A correlation existed between a teacher's years of experience and student growth (Young, 2018). Young (2018) conducted a study on the link between teacher retention and student achievement. Furthermore, Young explained that within one year, in the same school, test scores decreased by 7.4% to 9.6% of a standard deviation in the content area of math and 6% to 8.3% in the content area of English Language Arts as a result of significant teacher turnover. As a result, Young and Toropova et al. (2021) emphasized that teacher turnover results in a negative outcome that influences the total school community regardless of student enrollment numbers.

The retention of quality teachers is a pertinent element in ensuring student achievement (McIntosh et al., 2016). McIntosh et al. (2016) explained that school administrators play a substantial role in student achievement in addition to teacher outcomes such as collegiality, attitudes, job satisfaction, and commitment to the school.

Akin to Young's study on the link between teacher retention and student achievement, Qadach et al. (2020) carried out research on how principals influence teachers who, in turn, influence student achievement. Louis et al. (as cited in Qadach et al., 2020) explained that school leadership affects student outcomes through collaborative learning, instruction, and classroom environments. In summary, the study identified that principals could operationalize strategies such as gathering, storing, analyzing, and distributing information to empower teachers, thus positively affecting teacher attitudes that result in increased student achievement.

Recent research reflects that teacher quality is a key element in influencing student achievement irrespective of retention/attrition (Gibbons et al., 2018). Gibbons et

al. (2018) conducted a study on the impact of teacher entry and exit on student

achievement. The study revealed many relevant points: (a) the entry of highly effective

teachers raised achievement, (b) the entry of unsatisfactory teachers lowered

achievement, (c) the exit of highly effective teachers lowered achievement, and (d) the

exit of unsatisfactory teachers raised achievement (Gibbons et al., 2018). An additional

key finding was that male students are more severely affected than female students by the

entry and exit of a teacher. Furthermore, incoming seasoned teachers caused less of a

disruption to the staff as compared to new teachers (Gibbons et al., 2018). To summarize,

Gibbons et al. explained that teacher retention or the lack of retention will have different

effects on student achievement depending on the quality of teachers who are entering and

leaving.

In a study on how teacher job satisfaction influences student achievement,

Banerjee et al. (2017) addressed two research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between teacher job satisfaction and students' math and

   reading growth in elementary school?

2. How do schools' organizational cultures moderate the relationship between

   teacher job satisfaction and student achievement growth? (p. 203)

The conceptual framework for this study focused on job satisfaction (e.g., an affective or

emotional response to one's job; Banerjee et al., 2017). More explicitly, Banerjee et al.

explained that strong teaching is a predictor of increased student achievement. In

alignment with Pedota (2015), Banerjee et al. noted that teachers' attitudes and beliefs

regarding their abilities to teach and make a difference in teaching and learning (personal

teaching efficacy) and the abilities of students to learn (general teaching efficacy) are key factors in increased student achievement.

Recently, research has reported that student achievement is directly and indirectly related to principal leadership, climate and characteristics, and collective efficacy (Park et al., 2019). Park et al. (2019) examined how mechanisms such as PLCs, collective responsibility, principal support, and group-level teacher expectations affect student achievement. More precisely, Day et al. (as cited in Park et al., 2019) explained that principal leadership influences student achievement indirectly through teacher characteristics, collective teacher efficacy, teacher instruction, teacher capacity and motivation, teacher-student interaction and professional culture, teacher's job satisfaction, achievement orientation, and feedback practices. To that end, Park et al. stated that principal support to teachers is the key aspect of school leadership and ultimately student achievement.

Blazar (2015) conducted a study on grade-level teaching assignments and their effects on student achievement. In this study, the focus was on three research questions:

1. Do inexperienced teachers, those with low value-added scores, or those who work in high-risk schools (e.g., high-turnover, low-achieving, and/or low-income schools) switch grades at higher rates than their colleagues in a way that may exacerbate inequity?

2. Is grade reassignment related to teachers' long-term career trajectories (retention in their school or school district)?

3. Do these trends differ for those who switch to a grade adjacent to their original assignment versus those who switch to a grade farther away? (Blazer, 2015, p. 214)

Blazar explained that in addition to teacher and administrator interviews, administrative records inclusive of teacher observations, demographic data, and student test scores were reviewed.

As higher numbers of teachers switch grades, most being early career teachers who transition from low-achieving or high-minority schools, student achievement is increasingly negatively affected (Blazar, 2015). Moreover, teachers who switch grade levels leave schools at an increased rate and have less of an impact on student achievement, as compared to their colleagues who remain in the same grade placement and whose students exhibit increased achievement (Blazar, 2015). In conclusion, Blazar noted that there is an array of explanations for why teachers switch grades (e.g., administrators reassign teachers based on grade level needs, change in cohort size, teacher turnover, matching teachers with specific groups of students, etc.). In alignment with the explanations for teachers switching to alternative grades, Blazar noted that school districts need to investigate why teachers are switching grade levels at a high rate, considering the impact on student achievement.

Blazar's (2015) results are meaningful to this study as they align with Herzberg's two-factor theory in the areas of motivators (e.g., the work itself), hygiene factors (e.g., work conditions) and transformational leadership (e.g., individual consideration). As an outcome, Blazar found that teachers who stay in a grade level have greater job

satisfaction. Blazar, similar to Banerjee et al. (2017), addressed how teacher job satisfaction and stability positively impact student achievement. The results from Blazar's study provide school principals a better understanding of the importance of providing stability in assigning teachers to grade levels, thus allowing principals to develop specific teacher retention strategies.

**Principal Strategies for Teacher Retention**

An effective principal is one who provides support to teachers, communicates the vision and mission of the school, and implements school policies and procedures (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). Retaining good teachers should be one of the most important goals for school principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Darling-Hammond et al. further noted that extensive evidence reflects that good teachers are the most important factor of student achievement. To that end, all principals should be familiar with strategic teacher retention efforts in order to provide students with consistent and high-quality teaching and learning.

In a study focused on the effects of principals' behaviors on students, teachers, and school outcomes, Liebowitz and Porter (2019) explained that principals are critical in improving teaching and learning in schools. To that end, Liebowitz and Porter determined that little was known about the leadership strategies that principals should implement to improve learning outcomes. Consequently, Liebowitz and Porter found that there is a direct relationship between a principal's leadership and student achievement. Unexpectedly, Liebowitz and Porter determined that the strongest indicator of principal quality is their transition from one school to another. More specifically, it was noted that

as school districts rotate principals across schools on a periodic basis, principals and schools increase their knowledge base on leadership practices (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). Findings from this study revealed that student achievement was positively influenced by the following five categories of principal behaviors: instructional management, internal relations, organizational management, administration, and external relations. Two out of the five categories (instructional management and internal relations) influenced teaching and learning more often than the other three.

Similar to Liebowitz and Porter (2019), Cemaloglu and Savas (2018) conducted a study to determine the relationship between the supportive behaviors of principals and teacher leadership. Cemaloglu and Savas explained that in the field of education, the term teacher leadership is used in referencing teachers who take an active role in moving the school forward in areas such as climate, organizational commitment, and school effectiveness. The findings from this study reflect that when teachers have positive attitudes about their leadership, they are enthusiastic about exhibiting their teacher leadership behaviors (Cemaloglu & Savas, 2018). As a result, Cemaloglu and Savas explained that there is a need for principals to provide professional development to teachers focused on leadership development skills. Cemaloglu and Savas further noted that there are positive outcomes associated with principals who adopt the idea that teachers should be empowered with leadership skills that will prepare them for roles outside of the classroom. Based on these findings, there is a direct correlation between principals' supportive behaviors and the motivators within Herzberg's two-factor theory of achievement, responsibility, advancement, and growth.

The association between teacher job satisfaction and supportive school administrators has been examined (Ansley et al., 2019). Ansley et al. explained that higher teacher job satisfaction is associated with increased teacher efficacy and positive interpersonal interactions within the school. Likewise, Ansley et al. noted that principal practices are the strongest determinant of job satisfaction for teachers. A survey allowed teachers to detail what they felt was effective administrative practices. One practice discussed by teachers was the consistent reinforcement of school-based policies; this practice reflects the need to work in a safe environment with schoolwide systems and structures. Teachers wanted administrators to provide them with support for student behavior management; this practice allows teachers to maximize teaching and learning time and ensures a safe, productive school environment. Teachers desired regular communication and constructive feedback from administrators; this practice may build the capacity of teachers through ongoing commendations and recommendations regarding instructional practices. The inclusion of teachers in school-wide decision making allows all staff to have a voice. Teachers also desired administrators to provide resources that would allow teachers to develop materials for lessons. Finally, providing mentors to new teachers to support them as they adjust to the demands of the job and gain teaching experience while accessing resources is a key practice. In summary, Ansley et al. concluded that effective leadership is a prerequisite to job satisfaction for teachers and related to perceptions of student achievement. Additionally, teachers shared that effective leaders should build and maintain positive relationships with teachers, thus creating a positive school climate and culture.

To aid in operationalizing teacher retention efforts, school administrators conducted a roundtable discussion with other school administrators on administrative support and mentoring to address teacher retention (Abitabile et al., 2019). Through discussion, many topics (e.g., teacher shortage, teacher retention, reasons teachers leave, resources to cope with teacher retention) were broached. In this roundtable, Abitabile specifically explained that his efforts were primarily focused on supporting new teachers as this allows him to converse with them about the vision and mission of the school; this allows teachers to feel that they are a valued member of the school (Abitabile et al., 2019). Similarly, Klafehn noted that he focused his efforts on supporting non-tenured teachers; this support occurs through pairing new teachers with veteran teachers and encouraging new teachers to take on leadership roles (Abitabile et al., 2019). Additionally, Klafehn explained that his efforts also include an emphasis on wellness to combat the increased levels of stress that teachers experience. Klafehn provided specific examples related to wellness such as using faculty meetings to conduct a staff volleyball game or participating in a 5k walk/run (Abitabile et al., 2019). Kiger-Williams added that in her school district, there is an emphasis on involving teachers in the daily workings of the school. Teachers participate in school functions such as committee meetings, instructional programming, wellness, and mediation (Abitabile et al., 2019). Getting teachers involved in school functions helps to relieve teachers of stress.

In a subsequent editorial by Abitabile (2020), teachers' perceptions of their principals' effectiveness were investigated to determine the influence that principals have on a school district's ability to retain its teaching staff. Abitabile explained that with the

need for teachers increasing each year and since job satisfaction is the key to teacher

retention, there is an equivalent growing need for school administrators to ensure that

teachers are satisfied in their jobs. To that end, Abitabile noted that it is ultimately the

principal's responsibility to seek out ways to increase overall job satisfaction for teachers;

thus, a principal's leadership directly contributes to the job satisfaction of teachers.

Abitabile noted four major behaviors that teachers explained as having a significant

impact in making decisions regarding their retention: (a) increased visibility in the

building, (b) building relationships and communicating with school stakeholders, (c)

developing a shared value system that defines the culture in the building, and (d)

encouraging teachers to embrace leadership roles within the building. In alignment with

the conceptual framework used for this study, aspects of Herzberg's two-factor theory

(supervision, relationships, and advancement) and the 4Is of transformational leadership

(e.g., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and

intellectual stimulation) can be identified within those four major behaviors.

Abitabile et al. (2019) primarily focused on supporting new teachers; however,

Kimbrel (2019) looked at a preceding step and conducted a study that investigated

principals' teacher hiring practices. Kimbrel recognized that receiving instruction from a

high-quality teacher directly correlates with greater student learning outcomes. Kimbrel

additionally acknowledged that school principals are in an era where the stakes are high

and student achievement is based on rigorous standards. Therefore, hiring highly

qualified teachers is vital. Kimbrel examined various hiring practices that principals use

such as research-based screening assessments, traditional interviews, panel interviews

with measurable data, panel interviews with parents, panel interviews with students, writing samples, and demonstration lessons. The research indicated that most principals use the traditional interview process which is known to be problematic because of its lack of predictive power, validity, and reliability (Kimbrel, 2019). As a result of this study, Kimbrel recommended that principals should receive additional professional development in best hiring practices. Kimbrel also mentioned the need for those in the field of education to reference literature in the field of management to glean elements and structures for an employee selection system that will produce high quality teachers.

Pujol (2018), president of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, published an article detailing how principals can ensure that every student is paired with an effective teacher. Pujol explained that principals are tasked with the responsibility of equitably assigning the most effective teachers to teach students with the greatest needs. Assigning teachers to classes, ensuring increased student achievement, and simultaneously implementing retention strategies are all responsibilities of effective principals (Ansley et al., 2019; Banerjee et al., 2017; Pujol, 2018). Pujol was able to detail strategies on how to match teachers with the needs of students to influence student achievement for rural, suburban, and urban schools. Pujol shared that analyzing teacher effectiveness data, including classroom observations and student growth data, is essential in the decision-making process. As noted by Pujol, a key component that principals should remain mindful of when hiring teachers is to include current teachers in the recruiting process. Pujol additionally cautioned principals of the importance of creating

systems and structures that support high standards and continuous improvement for all teachers.

Herzberg's two-factor theory, transformational leadership, and qualitative case studies have been used in the study of job satisfaction. Pakdel et al. (2018) conducted a study on factors that affect job motivation with dentistry faculty based on Herzberg's two-factor theory. The population for the study included faculty members from the Tabriz University of Medical Science. Through data analysis, Pakdel et al. explained that external factors were more effective on faculty members' motivation than internal factors. Pakdel et al. further shared that in alignment with Herzberg's two-factor theory; the absence of the external factors creates problems but does not inspire employees to work. Conversely, internal factors may encourage people to work. Specific findings in this study revealed that occupational security, an external factor, and the nature of the work, an internal factor, were the most important factors to faculty members.

Similar to Pakel et al. (2018), Hur (2017) conducted a study testing Herzberg's two-factor theory on public managers. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to understand how to keep public managers motivated to work (Hur, 2017). The methodology consisted of surveys. The survey questions included seven motivators and seven hygiene factors selected from Herzberg's two-factor theory. As a result of the study, Hur noted that job satisfaction significantly correlated with most motivators. Conversely, there was not a correlation between job satisfaction and hygiene factors. Moreover, Hur explained that as advised by Herzberg, job satisfaction was most affected by the work itself as opposed to working conditions and environment.

Job satisfaction is the crux of Herzberg's two-factor theory. It is additionally a core component of transformational leadership. Kouni et al. (2018) conducted a study on how transformational leadership influences job satisfaction. Kouni et al. (2018) explained that job satisfaction (e.g., positive work attitude) is often positively affected by transformational leadership. Additionally, Kouni et al. emphasized the importance of this study as relatively few studies have investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among teachers. In this study, the methodology used was a combination of questionnaires and interviews. Kouni et al. noted three themes from the research literature and used them to guide the study: (e.g., building a shared vision, providing individualized support by the school leader, and establishing common standards). Kouni et al. determined that there is a direct correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.

A study was conducted on how transformational leadership reduced the incidences of work-related stress for kindergarten teachers (Wang et al., 2019). Principals completed a questionnaire that included items addressing four dimensions: vision, charisma, individual consideration, and moral modeling. The questions aligned to vision determined whether the principal and teacher established a common vision, goals, and a plan to support the teachers (Wang et al., 2019). Questions aligned to charisma were related to the leader's ability to influence teachers to meet the school system's goals. Individual consideration questions focused on the leader's ability to understand the needs of all teachers and support them accordingly. Lastly, questions regarding moral modeling focused on the leader's integrity, fairness, and equality in working with teachers. Wang et

al. found that leaders exhibit high levels of political and moral qualities but may not be thorough in their planning for students. Wang et al. confirmed that leadership styles had evident classification characteristics and can predict the organizational climate within the school. Wang et al. explained that transformational leaders are equipped to produce an ideal working environment to maximize the performance of their employees. Wang et al. noted that the study's results offer explicit guidance for targeted leadership training for principals.

School administrators were interviewed in this qualitative case study in order to elicit valuable teacher retention strategies. Qualitative research is based on digging deeper to better understand how people think about, interact with, and understand various aspects of life and the world around them. It can be a particularly useful approach to studying educational problems that require developing an understanding of complex social environments and the meaning that people within those environments bring to their experience (Laureate Education, 2015). Past studies that have yielded strategies related to job satisfaction in other occupations used interviews or surveys to capture responses (Arokiasamy 2018; Berkovich, 2016; Kotni & Karumuri, 2016; Lee & Kuo, 2018; Murphy, 2018; Musifudin et al., 2019; Rehman et al., 2019; Ruiz, 2017; Sajid et al., 2018). Therefore, interviews have been used within this qualitative study. Using Herzberg's two-factor theory and transformational leadership as the foundation of the interview questions, strategies aligned to job satisfaction emerged. Moreover, the key concepts of teacher retention, student achievement, and the effectiveness of principals are all strategic components of the phenomenon of this study. The connection between the

three constructs is that school administrators play a substantial role in student achievement in addition to teacher outcomes such as collegiality, attitudes, job satisfaction, and commitment to the school (McIntosh et al., 2016). Therefore, the three variables are relevant to the phenomenon and warrant investigation.

Student achievement and the effectiveness of principals are both key components directly related to teacher retention. The most significant influence on student achievement is the quality of the classroom teacher (Ovenden-Hope et al., 2018). Second to the classroom teacher, the principal is a predictor of whether a teacher continues their tenure within the school (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). Grissom and Bartanen (2018) explained that intentional retention of teachers produces higher growth in student achievement; thus, it is imperative that schools retain quality teachers.

## Summary and Conclusion

In an attempt to determine specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting, the major themes that emerged in the literature included job satisfaction and job motivation. Throughout the literature on both Herzberg's two-factor theory and transformational leadership, job satisfaction and job motivation were noted as key components of employee gratification in the workplace. More specifically, as explained by Hur (2017), the work itself (a motivator within Hertzberg's two-factor theory) and not working conditions is most pertinent in yielding job satisfaction and worker retention. Similarly, the 4Is of transformational leadership emerged in studies conducted using this theory. Wang et al. (2019) explained that leadership styles had a

direct correlation to the 4Is of transformational leadership and can predict the organization's climate.

What was known in the literature regarding job satisfaction, job motivation, and specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting is that the leadership needs to be strategic. When employees are satisfied in the workplace, they will be more productive, and they will be retained in the organization for a longer period (Lamb and Ogle, 2019). To that end, specific strategies that support satisfaction need to be implemented. It has been determined that employees are inspired by motivators such as recognition, responsibility, and advancement; however, not all are enthused by hygiene factors (e.g., company policies, work conditions, relationships) (Kotni and Karumuri, 2016). Concerning transformational leadership in the school setting, Rehman et al. (2019) explained that transformational leaders demonstrate commitment and vision for change in the school setting. They additionally use innovative, creative, and imaginative ideas to positively influence their schools (Rehman et al., 2019). Through a roundtable discussion, Abitabile et al. (2019) discussed how supporting teachers is an important part of successfully implementing job satisfaction and motivational strategies.

Although there is a plethora of information on job satisfaction and motivation as they relate to specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting, the literature lacked specific information on specific retention strategies in the elementary school setting. In the field of education, there is a teacher shortage of over 110,000 (Hodge, 2019). Furthermore, Hodges (2019) noted that the number one concern among school administrators is the recruitment and retention of teachers. For that reason,

specific strategies are warranted to keep teachers in the classroom once they are recruited. Despite the plethora of information regarding job satisfaction and job motivation aligned to Herzberg's two-factor theory and transformational leadership that reveals what employees want, the literature still lacks specific strategies that align to the theories, specifically for use in the elementary school setting.

In this study, I focused on determining useful strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. The outcome of the study provides school leaders with specific strategies to employ in the elementary school setting. As a result, the gap in the literature and in practice was addressed by detailing specific examples aligned to motivators and hygiene factors as described in Hertzberg's two-factor theory and the 4Is of transformational leadership. These examples will provide principals with specific strategies that they can employ to retain teachers in the elementary school setting. In Chapter 3, I detail the methodology for the study. Chapter 3 comprises the following sections: (a) Research Design and Rationale, (b) Role of the Researcher, (c) Methodology, (e.g., Participant Selection; Instrumentation; Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection; and Data Analysis Plan), (d) Trustworthiness, and (f) Ethical Procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key components of the research method.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The of this qualitative case study was to ascertain how principals described their strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. There was a gap in the literature regarding specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. I collected data via semistructured interviews with principals, inclusive of authentic experiences, exploration, and individual views to determine themes and patterns (Yin, 2016). The findings of the study were used to determine specific strategies for retaining teachers in elementary schools.

In this chapter, details aligned to the methodology are provided. The chapter is comprised of the following sections: (a) Research Design and Rationale, (b) Role of the Researcher, (c) Methodology (i.e., Participant Selection; Instrumentation; Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection; and Data Analysis Plan), (d) Trustworthiness, and (e) Ethical Procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key components of the research method.

**Research Design and Rationale**

This qualitative case study addressed three central research questions:

RQ1: What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting?

RQ2: What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools did the principals identify?

RQ3: What leadership behaviors did principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting?

A qualitative case study research approach was selected for this study because it allows for an examination and analysis how human beings interpret a phenomenon in its natural setting (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, qualitative research is based on digging deeper to better understand how people think about, interact with, and understand aspects of life and the world around them (Yin, 2013). More specifically, a case study methodology is beneficial in examining multifaceted queries as it provides various views that support the triangulation of data (Yin, 2013). As explained by Yin (2013), a case study is based on a phenomenon with a limited number of procedures that represent the key ideas.

A qualitative case study was selected for this study as this approach allows for examination of individuals' lives and experiences as they relate to the phenomenon being studied (Dawidowicz, 2016). Saldaña (2016) noted that the qualitative case study provides the researcher an opportunity to conduct interviews inclusive of authentic experiences, exploration, and individual views that allow the researcher to understand the perspectives of others. Therefore, elementary school principals were interviewed to gather data on specific teacher retention strategies.

In this study, the phenomenon being researched included behaviors and actions of principals who work to retain teachers. The focus was on determining strategies implemented by principals in the elementary school setting to bolster the retention of teachers. To uncover these strategies, I chose a case study since it allows for the

investigation of principal perceptions and experiences related to the phenomenon of teacher retention. This case study was conducted using interview questions centered on Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational leadership theory. The interviews elicited the retention strategies used by the participants.

### Role of the Researcher

I am an educator with 27 years of experience in both teaching and supervisory roles. I supervise 18 principals through providing coaching and support aligned to instruction, data, and leadership practices. No principals whom I supervise were interviewed for this study. Therefore, participants did not have any allegiance or fear any retribution in participating in this research study.

Yin (2016) explained the six general attributes needed to do qualitative research well: listening, asking good questions, knowing the topic of study, caring about the data, doing parallel tasks, and persevering. To that end, the role of the researcher in this qualitative case study was to exhibit those six attributes as a part of my persona (Yin, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that researchers can be considered as both insider and outsider, as scholar and practitioner, as supervisor and employee, or as teacher and student. Similarly, Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted that the observer-participant in the research process gathers the experiences and perspectives of the participant from the interactions that take place.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that positionality is the researcher's role and identity as they intersect and are in relationship to the context and setting of the research. In short, positionality is the researcher's worldview of the topic, and it shapes the study

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl shared that ethics in qualitative research are multifaceted, complex, contextual, emergent, and relational. Yin (2016) explained that the best way to address research integrity is to disclose the conditions that might affect the study or the outcomes. Ravitch and Carl explained that conducting research in one's own workplace is ethically complex and might limit the research design possibilities. Furthermore, for researchers who personally know their participants, the risk of ethical vulnerability increases (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a part of this qualitative research study, I disclosed that although I did not directly supervise any of the participants, many of them know me in other capacities. Nonetheless, the potential for a power differential was highly unlikely since I did not include principals under my direct supervision as participants.

In order to address my own bias, I was mindful of my reflexive self and only reported the data provided (Yin, 2016). When a researcher is a part of the organization under study, that researcher's role as interviewer is already complex in trying to extract meaning from the interviewees (Yin, 2016). To that end, it was imperative that I revealed my feelings about the findings to determine the effect. Yin further noted that the preferred remedy is to be subtle to avoid deliberate biases. Yin additionally explained the importance of the researcher keeping organized field notes to acknowledge unwanted biases based on their own values. Therefore, I captured my fieldwork inclusive of my observations, personal biases, and insights through field notes. To further address my biases, I had an external peer reviewer who was qualified to review research, knows the

content, and could not identify participants examine the data and check for the logical

development of codes, themes, and findings in the analysis.

## Methodology

### Participant Selection

The method used to select participants was a purposeful sampling. Yin (2011)

defined purposeful sampling as "the selection of participants or sources of data to be used

in a study, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to

the study's research questions" (p. 311). With this purposeful sampling strategy, I

selected multiple elementary school principals as participants from one school district to

gather a variety of perspectives. The sample size for this study was eight elementary

principals. The criteria for participant selection were elementary school principals who

- lead schools in a school district in a large, urban-suburban school district in

  the Eastern United States,

- have 3 or more years of experience, and

- were from various school settings (e.g., Title I, Blue Ribbon, Special

  Education cluster programs, ranges of socioeconomic status).

To recruit participants for this study, I sent an email titled *Leader Interview*

*Consent Form* containing information regarding (a) the phenomenon of the study, (b) the

problem and purpose of the study, (c) the research questions and (d) the time limit for the

interview. A research study letter of approval for the study from the school district

accompanied the consent form. Prospective principal participants were asked to reply to

the email invitation and indicate whether they would or would not participate. A follow-

up email was sent to participants willing to participate in the study to schedule the interview.

The location for this study was a large, urban-suburban, public school setting in the Eastern region of the United States. The population for this study was 90 elementary school principals. Although there are 110 elementary schools in the district, for this study only 90 principals were eligible for selection to ensure research integrity, as 20 of the approxiamatley110 principals were directly supervised by me.

I forwarded a recruitment email to the principals who met the criteria within the school district. Principals were able to voluntarily decide whether they wanted to participate (Yin, 2016). Eight elementary principals were selected to participate in this qualitative research study. Yin (2016) noted that there is not a formula to determine sample size; the intent of a sample is to represent a larger population. Moreover, Guest et al. (2006) explained that data saturation occurs for the most part by the time 12 interviews are analyzed in a qualitative study. Therefore, the rationale for selecting eight of the elementary school principals was that they represented approximately 10% of the principals who met the criteria and thus aligned with the recommendation noted by Yin (2016) for data saturation.

**Instrumentation**

Rubin and Rubin (2012) shared that interviewing allows researchers to explore complex, contradictory, or counterintuitive matters. Moreover, interviews provide an in-depth focused discussion in comparison to ordinary conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In this research study, which focused on the phenomenon of the behaviors and

actions of principals who work to retain teachers, I used semistructured interviews. The interview guide (see Appendix) was used in this study to ensure that all components of a good interview were included. The interview guide form starts with an introduction that states the purpose of the interview, provides an approximate time allotment for the interview, and emphasizes confidentiality related to this process. In summary, an interview guide is a researcher's script or steps to ensuring a successful interview (Lambert, 2012).

In alignment with the conceptual framework grounded by Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership, I developed interview questions to answer the research questions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that multiple iterations of the interview questions should be implemented to ensure that the questions are open-ended and yield quality responses. To that end, content validity of the instrumentation was established by having three professional colleagues (e.g., two principals and one executive director) assist in checking the interview questions for clarity and content. The expert panel was able to validate the interview instrument through assessing its alignment with the research questions and the ambiguity of each item to ensure validity. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that the goal of responsive interviewing is to build a deep understanding of a phenomenon based on the perspectives and experiences of the interviewees. To that end, interview questions were developed to gather comprehensive data to answer the research questions (see Table 6). A content and methodological expert committee consisting of one member holding a PhD in educational administration and another holding a PhD in educational leadership, policy, and research reviewed the

alignment of the interview questions with the conceptual frameworks and research questions.

The following interview protocol was used. First the participants were welcomed, and the purpose and process of the interview and its recording were discussed. Then the following demographic information was ascertained: gender, number of years worked in the school district and in the present school, whether they worked at a Title 1 school (Free and Reduced Meals rate), demographics of school population, percentage of English language learners and special education students, the total number of teachers, the number of non-tenured teachers, and the average class size (see Appendix).

**Table 6**

*Interview and Research Questions*

| Research question | Interview questions | Research question and interview question alignment |
|---|---|---|
| RQ1: What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting? | 1. What are specific strategies or approaches that you use to retain your teachers? What strategies work best? Which do not work well? | RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 |
| RQ2: What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools do the principals identify? | 2. How do you show teachers that you support them? | RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 |
| RQ3: What leadership behaviors do principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting? | 3. What strategies do you use to motivate and inspire your teachers? | RQ1 and RQ3 |
| | 4. How do you create positive relationships with teachers? | RQ2 and RQ3 |
| | 5. What structures do you have in place that allow teachers to ask questions or receive guidance from you? | RQ2 and RQ3 |
| | 6. What methods do you use to communicate with your teachers? | RQ2 and RQ3 |
| | 7. What structures do you have in place to ensure that teachers have a sense of security in the workplace? | RQ2 |
| | 8. How do you ensure that teachers have the resources they need to complete their job? | RQ2 |
| | 9. What are strategies that you use to support positive relationships between co-workers? | RQ2 and RQ3 |
| | 10. How do you support teacher advancement? | RQ1 and RQ3 |
| | 11. What strategies do you use to build teacher capacity? | RQ1 and RQ3 |
| | 12. How do you offer leadership opportunities? | RQ1 and RQ3 |
| | 13. How do teachers have opportunities to be a part of the decisions making process in your school? | RQ1 and RQ3 |
| | 14. What are ways that teachers can be innovative in your school? | RQ1 and RQ3 |
| | 15. Is there something that you have heard about and would like to try in your school? | RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 |
| | 16. What aspect of teacher retention might it support? | RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 |

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The recruitment of participants for this study was accomplished through forwarding an email to elementary school principals within the district meeting the aforementioned criteria. This email was sent to participants using my Walden University email address. The approval letter from the local school district was included in the email, denoting consent to conduct the study within the locality. Additionally, an overview of the doctoral dissertation's background, problem, purpose, methodology, sample interview questions, voluntary participation, confidentiality and privacy, withdrawal process, and data disposal was available upon request. Moreover, components of the *Research Activities Timeline* were shared which denoted the time required for participants and accompanying activities.

A recruitment window of two weeks was recommended for this process. Interested individuals were able to reply to the email within a two-week timeframe regarding their consent to participate in the study. A follow-up email was sent to participants willing to participate in the study within one week of each participant's response to schedule the interview. If no one had expressed an interest in the study, the criteria set forth would have been adjusted and included principals with two years of experience as compared to those with three years or more. Incentives were not offered in this study.

When consent was received, participant interviews were scheduled at an agreed upon time. A 3-week date range was established in which interviews were conducted. The data collection instrument for this study was semistructured interviews. For this

study, interviews were conducted via the Microsoft Teams application or by telephone.

Lambert (2012) explained that interviews do not have to be face-to-face conversations

and can be conducted via email, instant messaging, video-conferencing, or telephone.

During the interviews, I used videoconferencing or telephone calls depending on the

preference of each participant. The time allotment for each interview was approximately

one hour. Through the use of an audio recording application, each interview was

captured, as memory could not be relied upon (Lambert, 2012). Once the data from the

interviews were collected, they were transcribed, thus allowing me to get to know the

data (Lambert, 2012).

Initially, transcript reviews were completed within two weeks to allow

participants the opportunity to review the transcripts to make corrections and changes.

Descriptive validity provides the researcher with an opportunity to share the transcription

of the interview with the interviewee (Thomson, 2011). Therefore, the transcript from

each participant was shared with them to ensure that the data accurately reflected what

they said. Thomson (2011) explained that descriptive validity increases the credibility of

the study and reinforces the collaborative and ethical relationship with the participants.

Descriptive validity additionally ensures that there are no omissions of data. Thus, it is

essential to include all data to gain a full understanding of the interview. Once descriptive

validity was concluded, each principal was thanked for their participation.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that qualitative research focuses on generating

meaning and understanding through robust descriptions. A qualitative case study can be a

particularly useful approach to studying educational problems that requires developing an understanding of complex social environments and the meaning that people within those environments bring to their experience (Laureate Education, 2015). To connect the data gleaned from interviews to a specific research question, codes, categories, and themes are identified and analyzed. Codes, categories, and themes are derived through data collected in qualitative studies through interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Each code, category, and theme is a scaffolded step in the process of organizing and managing the data.

Coding is essential in organizing the data to determine patterns and divergent patterns within the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that researchers should document on the transcript a word or phrase that represents what they think a given passage means. In looking at the commonalities within the codes identified, categories develop (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As an outcome of categories, themes are developed. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that the theme represents the significant perceptions identified in the data.

## Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the extent to which one can have confidence in the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba 1986). Qualitative researchers rely on the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish a trustworthy study (Burkholder et al., 2016). Yin (2016) explained that the goal is to embed trustworthiness in the methods the researcher uses to generate data rather than debate over the essential "truthfulness" of the data. In short, Korstjen and Moser (2017) explained that trustworthiness is simply a question of, "Can the findings be trusted?"

**Credibility**

Credibility is the believability of the research findings in accordance with the data provided (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Shenton (2004) explained that credibility focuses on how congruent the findings are with reality. Korstjen and Moser (2017) shared that strategies such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and descriptive validity ensure credibility. Prolonged engagement through the interview processes encourages participants to support their responses with examples. Additionally, follow-up questions are asked to gain a deeper understanding. The goal of this process is to build trust and clarify misinformation (Korstjen & Moser, 2017).

**Transferability**

Transferability is the relevance of a qualitative study to other circumstances (Yin, 2016). Demonstrating that the outcomes of the work at hand are applicable to a broader population is often the concern. Burkholder et al. (2016) explained that it is the researcher's responsibility in regard to transferability to provide a sufficient description of the setting and the assumptions of the study. This will support the reader in making an informed application of the findings of the study (Burkholder et al., 2016). Moreover, Korstjen and Moser (2017) shared that it is the researcher's responsibility to provide a 'thick description' of the participants and the research process, thereby supporting the reader in determining whether the findings are transferable to their own locale.

**Dependability**

Dependability can be defined as indications of consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting (Korstjen & Moser, 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1986) stressed the

close ties between credibility and dependability. Burkholder et al. (2016) noted that

dependability means that the instruments used to collect data will produce consistent

results across distinct data collection occurrences. Korstjen and Moser (2017) noted that

dependability is inclusive of the aspect of consistency. Lincoln and Guba shared that an

audit trail in the form of reflexive notes and records that include raw data,

methodological processes, and process notes ensures the dependability of the data.

Korstjen and Moser explained that the researcher needs to use the strategy of completing

audit notes as they have the responsibility of providing a complete set of data for the

analysis (e.g., decisions made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling,

emergence of the findings, information about the data management, etc.).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is the understanding that the interpretation of the data should not

be based on the researcher's own inclinations and viewpoints, but in grounded data

(Korstjen & Moser, 2017). Burkholder et al. (2016) noted that confirmability requires

that other informed researchers would arrive at essentially the same conclusions when

examining the same qualitative data. The focus with confirmability is that the results are

derived from the thoughts of the informant, not the thoughts of the researcher (Shenton,

2004). Korstjen and Moser (2017) shared that the strategy of a reflexive journal inclusive

of the researcher's personal notes or documentation of the researcher's thinking

throughout the research process ensures the confirmability of the data. I employed a peer

reviewer who is qualified to review research, knows the content, and could not identify

the participants. The role of the reviewer was to examine all of the data and check for the

logical development of codes, themes, and findings. This reviewer holds an Ed.D. in educational leadership and is currently practicing at the school district level. The identities of the participants were confidential, and the *Leader Interview Consent Form* was shared to ensure confidentiality.

## Ethical Procedures

Yin (2016) explained that studies with human participants such as in this study require prior approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The purpose of the prior approval is to ensure that there are no serious risks of harming participants as an outcome of the study (Yin, 2016). To that end, guidelines from the IRB are inclusive of four major procedures that must be addressed: (a) obtaining voluntary informed consent from participants, (b) considering the harms and risks and minimizing any threat of harm, (c) choosing participants equitably, and (d) assuring confidentiality about the identity of participants. Rubin and Rubin (2012) further noted that it is the researcher's ethical responsibility toward participants to (a) show respect through being honest about the study, (b) honor promises by following through with whatever was promised, and (c) not pressure interviewees to participate in the study or answer questions they may be reluctant to answer.

Through Walden University's IRB, guidelines for research studies are provided to ensure ethical procedures are followed. In alignment with those guidelines, the *Leader Interview Consent Form* was included in the body of the email which invited elementary principals to participate in the interviews. In this case study design, consent was obtained through an email response denoting that the interviewee agreed to participate in the study.

In accordance with Walden University's IRB pre-approval guidelines for this study, all participants must have been in a leadership role, however, potential participants could not have been a subordinate of mine. I was additionally accountable for ensuring that the *Partner Organization Agreement* was completed. This agreement detailed the site's responsibilities and the researcher's responsibilities as related to the study. Walden University's IRB also outlined a four-step process to achieve ethics approval. Finally, in displaying allegiance to Walden University, doctoral candidates were reminded of the ethical principles that were adhered to: (a) protect the integrity of Walden University, (b) exhibit professional conduct at all times, and (c) protect the promise of confidentiality.

To address ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes, it was shared that conducting research in one's own workplace is ethically complex and might limit the research design possibilities (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, as a part of this qualitative research study, I disclosed that although I did not directly supervise any of the participants, I have worked with many of them in other capacities. Nonetheless, the potential for a power differential was not possible as no one approached for this study was under my supervision. Moreover, in the event that ethical concerns related to data collection arose, they would have been addressed by explaining to the participant(s) that this was a voluntary process and that they were under no pressure to proceed with the interview or answer questions. Emphasis was placed on confidentiality during this research process. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to make corrections and changes to their data by reviewing the transcripts through the process of descriptive validity. The protection of the confidential data was highlighted by explaining that

interview transcripts will be archived for at least five years, and that the data would only be gathered to determine themes and patterns and would not identify individual participants.

## Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine principals' strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. This chapter provided a summary of the methodology of this qualitative case study. The sample size for this study consisted of eight elementary principals. To identify participants for this study, an email was sent containing information regarding the phenomenon of teacher retention, the problem and purpose of the study, the research questions, and the time limit for the interview. The data analysis plan aligned to codes, categories, and themes was discussed. An explanation of how credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability established a trustworthy study was additionally conveyed in this chapter. Finally, guidelines for research studies were provided to ensure that this study's ethical procedures were in alignment with Walden University's IRB. In Chapter 4, results of the data as they relate to the setting, collection, analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness are discussed.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain how principals described their strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. Themes aligned to each research question emerged and reflect what strategies and behaviors the principals identified for retaining teachers at these schools. The intersectionality of the themes and the elements of the conceptual framework were also determined. In this chapter, I share details aligned to the setting, data collection processes, data analysis, and finally the that developed through interviews and the coding process.

**Setting**

During the time in which this study was conducted, the COVID-19 pandemic was prevalent in the United States. Due to the pandemic, all the schools in the large, urban–suburban school district in the Eastern United States had transitioned to 100% virtual instruction for approximately 10 months. To collect data for this study, I sent an email from my university email address to all elementary school principals who met the following criteria:

- led a school in a district in a large, urban–suburban school district in the Eastern United States,

- had three or more years of experience, and

- were from various school settings (e.g., Title I, Blue Ribbon, Special Education cluster programs, ranges of socioeconomic status).

As responses were received from the principals, I made a phone call to each potential participant to provide them an understanding of participation and shared next steps regarding the leader interview consent form in an email. The interviews were scheduled based on a mutually agreed upon time once the potential participant consented to participate in the research and I received the signed consent form.

Participant interviews were conducted via the videoconferencing application Microsoft Teams using semistructured interview questions. Due to the pandemic, interviewing principals through Microsoft Teams allowed me to ensure safety. Interviews do not have to be face-to-face conversations and can be conducted via email, instant messaging, videoconferencing, or telephone (Lambert, 2012).

Eight principals participated in the study. Five out of the eight principals participated in the interview from their work location, whereas three were in their home setting. A process that became consistent with all participants was providing the interview questions to each principal as the interview was being scheduled. This became a practice for all the participants after the first principal requested to have the interview questions before the scheduled interview.

The average number of years working in the field of education for the eight participants in the study was 26 years. Additionally, the average number of years in the role of principal for the eight participants was 11 years. Four of the participants were male, and four were female (see Table 7). Seven of the participants were White, and one was classified as Race Unknown. Two principals had served in their current schools for

the duration of their principalship. Three principals had served in two schools, while

three principals had served in three separate schools.

**Table 7**

*Demographic Information*

| Pseudonym | Years in education | Years as principal | Years in present school | Gender |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------|
| P1 | 29 | 15 | 3 | Female |
| P2 | 30 | 13 | 5 | Female |
| P3 | 23 | 11 | 4 | Male |
| P4 | 33 | 10 | 3 | Female |
| P5 | 18 | 7 | 6 | Male |
| P6 | 26 | 11 | 11 | Male |
| P7 | 27 | 16 | 16 | Male |
| P8 | 24 | 6 | 2 | Female |

The schools represented in this study varied in student enrollment; one smaller

elementary school had approximately 200 students, whereas a larger elementary school

had nearly 650 students. Class sizes across schools were similar, with the average class

size of 23. The number of teachers varied from school to school but reflected that staffing

was commensurate with the enrollment. Finally, half of the principal participants led Title

I schools, and the other half led non-Title I schools (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

*School Demographic Make-Up*

| Pseudonym | Approximate number of students enrolled | Average class size | Number of teachers on staff | Number of non-tenured teachers | Title I status |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| P1 | 650 | 25 | 35 | 5 | Non-Title I |
| P2 | 300 | 25 | 20 | 4 | Title I |
| P3 | 600 | 24 | 40 | 8 | Non-Title I |
| P4 | 200 | 22 | 15 | 1 | Non-Title I |
| P5 | 500 | 24 | 40 | 4 | Title I |
| P6 | 475 | 23 | 55 | 6 | Title I |
| P7 | 425 | 23 | 45 | 4 | Title I |
| P8 | 450 | 24 | 40 | 2 | Non-Title I |

In general, the participants appeared to feel comfortable responding to the interview questions. Although I supervise principals, the participant principals were chosen so that they were not in my team of school leaders. Therefore, participants did not have any allegiance or fear any retribution for participating in this study. During many of the interviews, principals veered away from the interview process and began discussing elements related to the pandemic, virtual teaching and learning, and the transition to school reopening. Nonetheless, participants were able to respond to all the interview questions in a purposeful manner.

## Data Collection

Upon receiving approval from Walden University's IRB (Number 08-28-20-0755374) and the school district's IRB, all data collection procedures were completed in alignment with the guidelines. As an outcome of the pandemic and the onset of a virtual beginning to the school year, I decided not to start the recruiting process immediately. This pause allowed me to determine an opportune time to initiate recruitment based on principals' schedules.

In this qualitative case study, eight principals who met the criteria participated. I began recruiting participants by emailing principals the *Leader Interview Consent Form*, which included the interview procedures, potential risks and benefits, and information associated with the confidentiality of interview recordings and transcripts. Moreover, the form reflected the need for principals willing to participate to respond to me in a return email with the words "I consent." Additionally, the consent form provided potential participants with an introduction of the study including the background, problem, purpose, and methodology. A phone call was made to principals willing to participate in the study to schedule the interviews accordingly. A calendar invitation with attached interview questions was additionally sent through the Microsoft Teams application to ensure that both the interviewer and participants met for the interview at the correct time.

Eight individual interviews were conducted with principal participants with an interview guide containing semistructured interview questions (see Appendix). At the onset of each interview, I reiterated the purpose of the study, explained the recording process that would be used, and emphasized confidentiality related to the process. Seven demographic questions were posed during the initial segment of the interview. Asking these questions helped the participants feel at ease as they prepared to respond to the open-ended questions. Sixteen questions followed that were directly aligned to the research questions for this study. The interview questions were designed to determine the support strategies principals used to retain teachers, principals' leadership behaviors used to create and maintain school culture to retain teachers, and challenges to retaining teachers in the elementary setting.

Data for this qualitative case study were collected during one-on-one interviews with principals via Microsoft Teams. The time of day that each principal selected to be interviewed played a role in their location during the interview. Moreover, the pandemic and the need to social distance in the workplace provided some participants with the option of being in their home during the workday. Each interview was conducted in one session. Prior to all interviews, participants were made aware via the leader interview consent form, during the scheduling phone conversation, or through the calendar invite that interviews may take up to 1 hour. The interviews ranged from 29 minutes to 75 minutes. Only one interview exceeded the allotted time. P6 was interviewed in the comfort of his home during a weekend, so his responses were multilayered and as an outcome, the interview exceeded the proposed hour. Additionally, P8 had an impromptu parent conference at the scheduled time of the interview and texted me to request the interview be delayed by 30 minutes. As an outcome, the interview was rescheduled by 30 minutes, and P8 had the most condensed interview of 29 minutes; this leaves to question whether P8's responses might have been more in-depth had more time been available. The interviews took place over a 2-week period. The location, frequency, and duration of the interviews are reflected in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Location, Frequency, and Duration for Each Principal Participant*

| Principal participant | Location [a] | Frequency | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | Principal's office | One interview | 43 min 19 s |
| P2 | Principal's home | One interview | 38 min 9 s |
| P3 | Principal's office | One interview | 51 min 12 s |
| P4 | Principal's home | One interview | 52 min 21 s |
| P5 | Conference room | One interview | 32 min 41 s |
| P6 | Principal's home | One interview | 75 min |
| P7 | Principal's office | One interview | 38 min 29 s |
| P8 | Principal's office | One interview | 29 min 24 s |

[a] Refers to location of interviewee; all interviews took place via Microsoft Teams.

The interviews were recorded using a cell phone application titled Temi (https://www.temi.com/). Temi is an audio recorder that has the capability of transcribing conversations for a nominal fee. Within minutes after each interview, a complete transcription of the interview was emailed to me. Exact times of the dialogue for Speaker 1 and Speaker 2 were provided. In addition to recording the interviews through the Temi application, as a back-up method, I used a digital voice recorder. Notes were also taken using the interview guide. Accordingly, the notes from the interview guide became a part of my field notes.

At the conclusion of each interview, I shared with participants that I would send them an email containing the transcript for review and requested that they respond to me with any corrections if necessary. After sending thank-you emails with attachments of the transcripts and guidance on making corrections to the transcript, no one responded with changes. However, P1 emailed back with a smiley face and shared, "Reads like a bunch

of rambling." P3 emailed back and shared, "Honored to be a part of this project and always happy to help." Additionally, P3 sent a follow-up email that included data for his population of students who receive special education services as he was not able to locate that data during the interview. P6 responded to the email and noted, "I really enjoyed the interview and thank you for allowing me to help you with this." No unusual circumstances were encountered in the data collection.

## Data Analysis

My initial coding method for data analysis in this qualitative case study involved a priori coding. In some studies, a provisional list of codes aligned to the conceptual framework should be determined beforehand to support the analysis that directly answers the research questions (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, to prepare for the first cycle coding, I listed the motivators and hygiene factors aligned to Herzberg's motivation–hygiene theory and the accompanying definitions (see Table 10). In a column next to the a priori codes, I labeled the heading codes in preparation for listing text that would support a priori codes.

Qualitative research focuses on generating meaning and understanding through robust description (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The robust descriptions are found in transcripts in concepts, events, themes, and examples that provide evidence in answering the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Further, it was important to "stay close" to the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), as it was my role as researcher to provide an analysis of ample and explicit evidence to support my conclusions. To that end, I listened to each of the recorded interviews according to participants and tracked the print in the transcript.

As I heard and saw words that appeared to align with a priori code listed, I highlighted the phrases or sentences. Subsequently, I used the highlighted text and carefully read through each transcript a second time to determine if the text supported the a priori codes. The phrases and sentences were placed in the column labeled codes. The same process was completed using the 4Is of transformational leadership as a priori codes (see Table 10). This allowed me to see the intersections of the codes. As I determined the codes that aligned to a priori codes, open codes began to emerge (see Table 11). Open coding is based on the researcher's interpretation of the data and requires researchers to remain open-minded to all possible theoretical directions (Saldaña, 2016).

**Table 10**

*First Cycle Coding: A Priori Codes*

| A priori codes | Codes (the participant voices) |
| --- | --- |
| Achievement: becoming the most that one can be | You support them by offering them the opportunities to grow and not leaving them out there (P1). When a teacher is not successful, you have to look at the administrator (P1). Small group time after school so that they can grow professionally (P2). Giving them choice in a professional development (P4). I can support teachers in developing them which I, feel is important to retain teachers (P6). Opportunity to grow in an area that maybe they haven't had an opportunity (P7). |
| Recognition: esteem, status, strength | I recognize every single person at some point in the year (P2). The positive relationship comes from, you know, finding the good in everything, three positives to one suggest (P2). Praise them for taking risks (P3). I like to support them by telling them the positives that I see either as a whole school or individually with teachers. So to try and make them feel good about their work. I recognize every single person at some point in the year (P2). The positive relationship comes from, you know, finding the good in everything, three positives to one suggestion (P2). Praise them for taking risks (P3). I like to support them by telling them the positives that I see either as a whole school or individually with teachers. So to try and make them feel good about their work (P4). Making sure that they know that I appreciate them understanding how hard their job is (P4). A positive quote or something I am just trying to have the staff celebrate (P4). Visit the classrooms too is huge because then they can know how they're doing and I'm giving shout outs as much as possible (P5). Focused on providing ongoing supports based on student teachers, targeted strengths and needs (P6). I've been doing that virtually as well and give people an opportunity to recognize their colleagues as well (P6). End all of my staff meetings with something inspirational (P6). Catching them and letting them know that they did something well (P7). They just have to have someone believe in them and then tell them (P8). |
| The Work Itself: creative and challenging work; participation in decisions making; job flexibility and autonomy | I empower them…take the lead on this (P2). Create a safe space for teachers to talk and give feedback and maybe ask those questions that they don't want to ask in front of administration (P3). Allowing teachers to have more opportunities to share those best practices and things we see happening in their classrooms (P3). You encourage them to take risks and they feel comfortable taking risks in your building and you praise them for taking risks (P3). I let them try whatever they want to try out if they talk to me about it and explain the reasoning behind it (P4). Grade level planning meetings.(P5) Build on teacher's strengths by giving them opportunities to develop these traits or strengths in alternate ways (P6). I'm not a micromanager (P6). I allow them to have some autonomy over what it is that they really want to work on (P6). When they have a concern or a question or an idea or a strategy that they think, by giving them support, if they want to try something and treating them professionally enough, that, you give them that opportunity and freedom to do it in a safe environment (P7). |
| Responsibility: accountability of an important job | We need to build the capacity of teachers to be professionals (P1). |
| Advancement: promotion opportunities | My good teachers keep leaving (P2). You can move those people into those positions. And I believe if you don't take that turn, you could end up losing really good people (P2). You don't want them to leave, but you know that, I can't hold people back because nobody held me back (P6). |

| A priori codes | Codes (the participant voices) |
|---|---|
| Growth: Opportunity for advancement/progression | It's a matter of the leader being cognizant of what is the teacher's career cycle (P1). We've got various leadership capacity opportunities (P1). I try to have conversations with them and listen to where are they in grad school. (P3) I am giving them opportunities to shadow (P3). Offering them like PD or opportunities to go out and see other teachers' instructional strategies to help them (P4). Lesson study opportunities for grade levels (P4). Intentionally setting up opportunities (P5). Grade level planning meetings (P5). So if I have teachers that are possibly exploring leadership paths, pulling them onto our leadership team, giving them leadership opportunities within the school, giving them a chance to provide professional development to others giving them a chance to be the team leader, and also to checking in with them consistently to provide them feedback (P5). I know how I can support them, because one of the things that I have learned is through the interview process (P6). I can support teachers in developing them which I, which I feel is important to retain teachers (P6). Complimenting them giving them opportunities (P7). Opportunity to grow in an area that maybe they haven't had an opportunity (P7). Individual professional development obviously is the observation process where we give support strategies to help the teacher (P8). Vertical discussion where we read articles, we do learning walks or learn from other teachers (P8). |
| Organizational commitments: working hours and personal time | About people feeling valued within the organization, but just allowing teachers to have more opportunities to share those best practices and things we see happening in their classrooms (P3). |
| Supervision: a positive relationship between leader-member interactions | You need to know them as a person and not just as a novice teacher in your school (P1). The biggest things about being a school principal is in the relationships you build with your staff. (P1) Understanding who they are and what their needs are (P1). Teachers from my previous school who have actually wanted to come to this school …I pride myself in the fact that I built that relationship with them (P2). The positive relationship comes from, you know, finding the good in everything, three positives to one suggest (P2). When people don't feel connected or feel supported, I think we've, we've lost them (P3). Supportive leadership rather than like the disciplinarian (P4). I think that part of my job is to not let us forget that there's a human element to what we do (P6). I try to never forget that I am a teacher first before I'm an administrator (P6). I needed people to see that I'm a human too.(P6) I think it's just the way they're treated, the way we speak to them (P7). Getting them what they need (P7). But if it's time for you to go then that's probably means it's time for you to go try something else (P7). |

| A priori codes | Codes (the participants voices) |
|---|---|
| Relationships: a positive relationship between co-workers and supervisors; work group interactions and co-workers' support | Part of supporting teachers is that my original background was in training as a teacher mentor (P1). Recognizing that their needs are different than our experienced teacher's needs (P1). Our non-tenure teachers have been assigned an experienced teacher to partner with (P1). The work really begins in the relationship building with the staff (P1). That's an incentive for people is provide collaborative planning time (P2). Establishing that rapport to really have them build a trusting relationship (P2). Team building activities where we mix up the groups of teachers (P2). What you value and that can help build relationships with teachers (P3). Building relationships with the teachers and giving them an opportunity to have an open relationship (P4). Feeling kind of like a family with their grade levels or the school community the relationships (P4). Providing opportunities for teamwork, like having common planning times (P5). Promote as much of a positive environment as possible and promoting teamwork (P5). It's colleagues recognizing colleagues (P6). |
| Work Conditions: the balance between employees working hours and personal time | Too many cooks in the kitchen will kill a new teacher (P2). And then we do kind of social things with the faculty meetings too (P4). Like we talked as we eat ice cream or get them pizza or just sitting around and talking (P4). |
| Salary: financial compensations for work performance | |
| Status: rank in relation to others | |
| Security: stable work environment | If you give them too many people, it's overwhelming for new teachers (P2). They can ask for support or ask questions with feeling safe (P4). |

## Table 11

*First Cycle Coding: Open Codes*

| Open code | Participant quotes |
|---|---|
| Feedback | I visit their classrooms every day (P2). Real time on the job embedded support that they get is critical (P2). I feel like classroom feedback is like really important (P3). Feedback that helps them do their job and makes their lives easier or just so they know where they stand (P3). I want to be able to provide feedback on, you know, what I'm seeing so far (P6). |
| Visibility | Open door policy (P1). I visit their classrooms every day (P2). I'm very visible in the building (P2). The priority for education must be us being available to them (P2). I think being visible is really important (P3). I keep an open door policy (P3). My door is always open for real. I'm not a principal who shuts the door (P4). Like I just walk around. And I do want to be visible, probably sitting down in their classrooms (P4). Visiting the classrooms too is huge because then they can know how they're doing and I'm giving shout outs as much as possible.(P5) I'm very hands on, so I'm very visual, visible through the building (P6). I make an effort to make sure I've been in as much as I can with our new people so I can be visible (P6). |

| Open code | Participant quotes |
|---|---|
| Communication | Open door policy (P1). Text is my biggest communication with my teachers in the virtual world right now (P1). Be through grade level meetings, monthly meetings, you know, faculty meetings those, typical meeting (P1). Open and honest with the group (P1). Offering teachers that reflection time (P1). I have one on one meeting with all non-tenure teachers (P2). Text me on my phone (P2). Email me the basic forms of communication (P2). Please feel free to email me and call me or stop by and see me if we're in the building with any questions that you may have. I keep an open-door policy (P3). Let people know, like there's no dumb question (P3). Send out or in daily communications (P3). Communication is really important (P3). They can ask for support or ask questions while feeling safe (P4). They'll text me after school, email me all the time. I send newsletters; optional check-ins, virtual team meetings (P4). So I'll send them a text or I'll send them an email or I'll give them a call and just kind of see how they're doing (P5). Frequent check ins (P5). Just intentionally creating space to talk with them, popping into their classrooms (P5). Frequent check ins with teachers providing opportunities for teachers to share about supports they may need in the classroom and seeing what I could do to provide those supports consistency with communication (P5). Having open communication (P6). You're not honest up front about your school you can lose people if they need to know what they're signing up for (P6). Grade level meetings is an opportunity for us to get what people are concerned about and, and input (P7). We have open line of communication (P8). Regular check ins with my new teachers on what's going well (P8). My door is truly, is always open if I'm in here (P8). We actually survey our teachers to find out what the needs are (P8). Handwritten thank you cards (P8). |
| Novice teachers | A lot of new teachers do sometimes feel unsecure in their workplace (P1). Recognizing that their needs are different than our experienced teacher's needs (P1). I have one on one meetings with all non-tenure teachers (P2). So for me, it starts there with non-tenured specifically (P3). And so then for us for non-tenure teachers specifically we really try to get them connected to a mentor (P3). New teacher orientation, we are connecting them with our main point of contact for a lot of our nontenured folks to ask questions and plan and kind of get a lot of those logistical things you know (P3). We lose a lot of teachers in years, one to five you know, in, in that range (P3). We've always tried to have a group for our teachers in years, one to five here, we've called it the conductors club (P3). Younger teachers new in their career when they don't have feedback or they don't feel supported is where I think that they start to get disconnected (P3). Giving them choice in a professional development (P4). Just comes back to hiring good people (P6). My new teachers, a lot of them will come to me in their first or second year and tell me what they want to do for their interests or their master's program (P6). I know how I can support them, because one of the things that I have learned is through the interview process (P6). What kind of supports they're going to be able to provide them as new teachers (P6). If you're not honest up front about your school you can lose people as they need to know what they're signing up for (P6). I think it's important that I meet with teachers to check in with them, especially on new people (P6). I will meet with my brand-new ones in a small group (P6). Two different thought processes regarding your new teachers and your tenure teachers (P8). |
| Tenured teachers | Teacher from my previous school who have actually wanted to come to this school …I pride myself in the fact that I built that relationship with them (P2). But we also are trying to through PLCs to individualize, the learning for teacher needs as well for their capacity in the classroom (P2). Giving them choice in a professional development (P4). |

To synthesize the codes aligned to the a priori codes and open codes, I allowed the research questions to guide me in determining categories. Once coding was completed, different groups called categories were determined through combing two or more of the initial codes (Yin, 2016). After rereading the codes aligned to the a priori codes, I was able to generate the categories. To solidify my aim at determining categories through putting groups of codes together, each time I asked myself whether the category was a support strategy, challenge to retaining teachers, or leadership behavior that influences school culture related to retaining teachers. If the category was supported by a research question, it was placed accordingly.

Once I derived the categories, I transitioned to second cycle coding. Second cycle methods of coding focus on theory building and require analytical skills (e.g., classifying, integrating, prioritizing, conceptualizing; Saldaña, 2016). As a result, I assembled all the categories together and began prioritizing them by patterns. Once the categories were identified by common patterns, I classified them into four new categories. In the latter phases of cycle coding, data are reassembled based on patterns and topics and begin to emerge in the form of themes and theoretical concepts (Yin, 2016).

**Table 12**

*Second Cycle Coding: Categories to Themes*

| Categories | Themes |
|---|---|
| Aligned to support strategies<br>• Supporting teachers through acknowledging their efforts<br>• Providing space for teachers to share practices<br>• Intentional growth experiences<br>• Communicating feedback for job-embedded professional development | Intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs |
| Aligned to differentiated support<br>• Creating a PLC for new teachers<br>• Inquire about support<br>• Provide individualized meetings<br>• Recognize individual needs<br>• Mentoring new teachers<br>• Differentiating professional development based on strengths and needs | Building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs |
| Aligned to challenges<br>• New teachers not fully understanding the intricacies of the school/job.<br>• New teachers with too many resources become overwhelmed.<br>• Growing teachers and supporting them and they move on.<br>• Lack of ability to build a rapport with teachers. | Communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding |
| Aligned to school culture<br>• Visiting classrooms to provide support<br>• Providing clear and frequent communication<br>• Providing team building<br>• Providing feedback to inspire<br>• Valuing the voice of teachers<br>• Empowering others through strong relationships | Creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork |

My data analysis for this study began with 17 a priori codes aligned to the motivators/hygiene factors and the 4Is of transformational leadership. Through coding the data from the interviews, the a priori codes generated 81 codes in which 61 open codes emerged and were reassembled based on patterns to form four categories and finally four themes directly aligned to the research questions. The themes that emerged from elementary school principals included (a) intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs; (b) building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs; (c) communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding; and (d) creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork. Each theme emerged from categories directly aligned to a research question. For example, the theme "intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs" answers the question "What support strategies do principals identify as using to retain teachers in their elementary school setting?" Directly linking to the research questions supported my analysis of the data. There were no qualities of discrepant cases that were factored into the data analysis.

## Results

The conceptual framework for this study focused on two theories: Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership. This qualitative case study addressed three central research questions:

RQ1: What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting?

RQ2: What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools do the principals identify?

RQ3: What leadership behaviors do principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting?

The findings from this study were obtained from the themes aligned to each research question (see Lambert, 2012). It is important to critically discuss the findings to inform practice in the field of the research study (Lambert, 2012).

**Results for Research Question 1**

What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting? Data from the interviews yielded two themes aligned to Research Question 1 that emerged and reflected a global response to support strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary setting.

*Theme 1.1: Intentional Recognition of Teachers' Essential Needs*

The first theme emerged from my data analysis as an outcome of categories that reflect the need for principals to support, acknowledge, provide, and communicate with teachers to sustain their retention. All principals demonstrated a firm understanding of the importance of being intentional in recognizing the essential needs of teachers. This was noted by principals in their responses that acknowledged teachers' needs. P1 explained, "That's how you support teachers… by knowing who they are." Along the same lines, P3 explained, "Not knowing your people as people, it doesn't work well. You know, not being clear in your communication, doesn't work for people." P6 noted the importance of the human element involved in recognizing and supporting teachers and shared, "I acknowledge the contributions that each makes to the school, but then I really take the time to get to know them individually and personally as much as I can." To that end, as

shared by the participants, in order to know teachers and determine what they need, building relationships and communication are a necessity. These two factors formed the basis of Theme 1.1.

**Building Relationships.** Throughout all the interviews, the importance of building relationships with teachers was emphasized. A skim of my memos reflected that most principals from the onset of their interview shared that relationship building was significant in retaining teachers. P1 explained, "The biggest thing about being a school principal is in the relationships you build with your staff." P2 additionally shared a strategy that aids principals in forging relationships with teachers and explained, "I think the biggest part literally is the positive relationships comes from, you know, finding the good in everything." P6 noted the outcome of principals building relationships with teachers and explained,

> When you built a relationship like that with people, then they're willing, even
>
> though they have a lot of things on their plate, they're willing to do it for you
>
> because they respect you. So part of that positive relationship is having that
>
> mutual respect. I respect you, as a teacher and you respect me as an administrator.

A key finding of building relationships was identified by principals as an outcome of the emerging theme of intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs.

**Communication.** To build relationships with teachers, principals noted the importance communication plays in forging relationships. Through a synthesis of participants' responses related to communication, both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication materialized. Principals noted a variety of forums in which to

communicate with teachers verbally (e.g., goals conferences, observations conferences, grade level meetings, faculty meetings, PLCs, virtual Microsoft Teams meetings). P1, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P8 all noted the importance of keeping the lines of communication open with teachers. P3 especially explained, "They probably get tired of it. Every email almost, that I send I say please feel free to email me, call me or stop by with any questions that you may have. I keep an open-door policy." P3 provides teachers with access in which they can initiate communication with the principal. Conversely, P5 noted a structure that was implemented to initiate communication and stated, "I conduct frequent check-ins with teachers, providing opportunities for them to share about supports they may need in the classroom and seeing what I could do to provide those supports and follow-up with consistent communication."

Nonverbal communication cues were noted in the form of the principals' visibility in the school and participation in hands-on experiences. P2 provided an example of how she used nonverbal communication with teachers:

The number one thing, I think it's imperative that I visit their classrooms every day, whether it's informal or if it's a formal process. I make it like an appointment on my calendar to do an informal visit. So, I'm very visible in the building. I also show teachers that I'm part of the work.

All principals addressed the importance of their visibility within the school. P4 shared, "I do want to be visible. I may sit down in your room for a minute or stand in the back." Likewise, P8 explained, "One of the bigger things is me being present. I feel like them seeing me throughout the building, out front in the mornings, during informal class

visits, in the cafeteria, and in all of the professional development, speaks volumes." Therefore, the key assertions of building relationships and communication were used by principals to intentionally recognize teachers' essential needs.

*Theme 1.2: Building Teacher Capacity through Identifying and Addressing Individual Needs*

The second theme aligned to research question one emerged as "building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs." The associated categories highlighted key words such as new teachers, support, individual needs, and differentiating. Throughout the principal interviews, participants conveyed that there is a need for different supports for novice or new teachers verses tenured/seasoned teachers. P8 explicitly stated, "You have two different thought processes regarding your new teachers and your tenured teachers, because they are different, and they need different things." P1 additionally shared, "Recognizing that their needs are different than our experienced teachers' needs, means recognizing it, not just during pre-service week, but during the year." As a result, support strategies noted by principals to build teacher capacity require differentiation based on need.

**New Teachers.** The value in beginning to assess a new teacher's capacity during the interview process was shared by participates. P6 stated, "I know how I can support them, because of the things that I have learned through the interview process." In direct alignment, P3 additionally provided insight on yet another value of the interview process for new teachers and explained,

We want to have them sit with a team of people that represent grade levels that

they'll work with potentially resource staff, obviously administration, so they kind

of get an idea of who are the faces and names and supports that they will have

available to them.

All principals interviewed for this research study demonstrated through their

remarks a responsiveness to supporting new teachers separate from seasoned teachers in a

variety of ways. P3 explained,

We usually try to connect them with a mentor within their team. During new

teacher orientation, we are connecting them with a staff development teacher to

ask questions and plan and get a lot of those logistical things out of the way.

P8 shared,

I have regular check-ins with my new teachers on what's going well, what are the

opportunities available, and if they have any questions. I find out if they need any

help. It doesn't need to be long. In the virtual setting, I just go in and ask how's it

going? I also like to do new teacher meetings with different grade levels so that

they can meet and just talk about what is happening within the school building.

Although a variety of support strategies for new teachers were shared by principals, two

responses reflected areas of caution that principals might find beneficial when building

their teachers' capacity. P6 explained, "What I've learned is that if you're not honest up

front about your school, you can lose people, so they need to know what they're signing

up for." P1 noted, "I feel like the overwhelmingness of too many people in the pot, too

many cooks in the kitchen, will kill a new teacher. And it's hard to remember that

because you think more is good, more is not good. You have to know what they need."

The key assertion of addressing the needs of new teachers was identified as a support strategy in retaining elementary teachers and emerged from the theme of "building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs."

**Tenured Teachers.** Data gleaned from interviews produced an understanding that support strategies for tenured teachers need to be more individualized as compared to new teachers. P2 stated, "We are also trying through PLCs, to individualize the learning for teachers' needs as well for their capacity in the classroom." P3 expressed, "I try to have conversations with them and listen to where they are in grad school? What they are studying or what they are passionate about? And then I always ask them how I can help." P4 explained, "So differentiating the PD based upon needs, provides certain people choice in a professional development strand." P5 shared, "We are intentional in setting up opportunities for teachers to build their individual capacity." P5 further noted,

> If I have teachers that are possibly exploring leadership paths, pulling them onto our leadership team, giving them leadership opportunities within the school, giving them a chance to provide professional development to others, giving them a chance to be the team leader, and also checking in with them consistently to provide them feedback.

Parallel to the need for new teachers to have specific support strategies, key findings additionally identified as an outcome of the theme of "building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs" reflected the need for tenured teachers to have individualized supports based on their capacity and skillset.

**Results for Research Question 2**

What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools do the principals

identify? Data from the interviews yielded one theme aligned to Research Question 2 that

emerged and reveal challenges principals identify regarding elementary teacher retention.

The theme "communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding" is the outcome of

data from interviews reflecting the need for transparency in the messaging that principals

provide.

*Theme 2.1: Communicating Clearly to Provide a Shared Understanding*

The categories aligned to the challenges principals identify in retaining teachers

all have a negative connotation. Examples of the wording emphasized that yielded a

negative undertone include "not fully understanding," "overwhelmed," "they move on,"

and "lack of ability to build rapport." As an outcome, principals' responses highlight the

need for honesty and building a rapport to ensure clear communication that provides a

shared understanding between teachers and principals.

**Honesty.** Principals in this research study underscored the importance of being

honest with teachers and being willing to have "courageous conversations." P1 explained,

"Being honest and having courageous conversations with people and knowing that 'what

you see is what you get' and that you don't have other agendas, needs to be set from the

very beginning." P3 explained, "Just telling them in person, sometimes when you have a

difficult conversation… having that honest conversation after to say, hey, like next time

we should really do it this way." P5 noted, "I try to be as honest as I possibly can be in

terms of why they're being rated the way that they are, where that will lead them in the

future, if it continues or if it changes where it could lead." Finally, P6 sums up the importance of honesty and stated, "What I've learned is that if you're not honest up front…you can lose people!" To mitigate challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools, principals identified the theme of "communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding." As an outcome, the key finding of honesty was found.

**Building a Rapport.** In every interview conducted, principals stressed the need for building a rapport with teachers. This directly mirrors building relationships and thus also aligns with Research Question 1. As P1 stated, "The biggest things about being a school principal is in the relationships you build with your staff." P1 further noted, "We have to always keep in mind that the work really begins in the relationship building with the staff and understanding who they are and what their needs are. It's, I call it responsive leadership." P2 expressed, "Establishing that rapport to really have them build a trusting relationship, is imperative." P2 additionally noted,

Teachers from my previous school have actually wanted to come to this school. So, I kind of pride myself in the fact that I built that relationship with them. I think one of the first things is really to establish a very solid positive rapport that is supportive. And the support for the specific strategy would be to incentivize why it would be important to be able to stay and we do that through positive things that are going on in the school.

Yet another outcome of the theme "communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding" that emerged as a strategy to alleviate the challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools was "building a rapport." Building a rapport and building

relationships (found to be a key finding in response to Research Question 1) were found to be synonymous.

**Results for Research Question 3**

What leadership behaviors do principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting? Data from the interviews yielded one theme aligned to Research Question 3 that emerged and reflects that principals need to focus on creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork.

*Theme 3.1: Creating an Environment of Collaboration, Open Communication, and Teamwork*

Principals shared the leadership behaviors they use to create and maintain a school culture for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. The six categories that emerged from the coding were visiting classrooms to provide support, providing clear and frequent communication, providing team building, providing feedback to inspire, valuing the voice of teacher, and empowering others through strong relationships. I developed these categories into a theme of "creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork." Teamwork and collaboration were highlighted by principals.

**Teamwork and Collaboration.** During the principal interviews, participants often used the terms teamwork and collaboration interchangeably. P5 noted, "If you have good people, they're gonna want to stick around, and just doing everything that you can to kind of promote as much of a positive environment as possible and promoting

teamwork too." P2 stated, "An incentive for people is to provide collaborative planning time…where small groups can grow professionally in their learning." P3 provided a collaborative practice and explained that, "Allowing teachers to have more opportunities to share those best practices and things we see happening in their classrooms." P3 also shared a practice that provides comfortability and noted, "Create a safe space for teachers to talk and give feedback and maybe ask those questions that they don't want to ask in front of administration."

Tables 13 and 14 reveal the intersection of the four themes that emerged as a result of this research study and the elements of the conceptual framework grounded by Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership. Both theories reveal overlap of the themes and the elements of the conceptual framework.

**Table 13**

*Themes Aligned to Herzberg's Hygiene–Motivation Theory*

| A priori codes | Intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs | Building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs | Communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding | Creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Achievement | | X | | X |
| Recognition | X | X | | |
| Work Itself | | X | X | X |
| Responsibility | | X | | |
| Advancement | X | X | X | |
| Growth | X | X | X | |
| Organizational Commitments | X | X | X | |
| Supervision | X | X | X | X |
| Relationships | X | X | X | X |
| Work Conditions | X | X | X | |
| Salary | | | | |
| Status | X | X | X | X |
| Security | X | X | X | X |

The mapping reflected in Table 13 is inclusive of all motivators and hygiene factors used as a priori codes in the data analysis process in this research study. Patterns identified in the data revealed that all the motivators were found to have some form of intersection with the themes that emerged. However, only three of the six motivators intersected with at least three of the themes (advancement, growth, and the work itself). Six out of the seven hygiene factors (organizational commitment, supervision, relationships with peers and supervisors, work conditions, status, and security) intersected with at least three of the emerging themes. Additionally, the theme of *building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs* revealed the greatest intersection with tenets from Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Conversely,

*creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork* disclosed

the least overlap with the tenets of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory.

**Table 14**

*Themes Aligned to 4Is*

| A priori codes | Intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs | Building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs | Communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding | Creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Idealized Influence (instills pride in the followers) | X | X | X | X |
| Inspirational Motivation (communicates effectively) | X | X | X | X |
| Individual Consideration (brings out the best efforts from each individual) | X | X | X | X |
| Intellectual Stimulation (think deeply about advancements) | X | X | X | X |

Table 14 lists the 4Is of transformational leadership employed as a priori codes in

the data analysis process. The data revealed the consistent pattern of all elements of the

4Is of transformational leadership intersecting with the emerging themes identified as an

outcome of the data analysis.

**Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is the confidence in a research study's findings (Lincoln & Guba

1986). Burkholder et al. (2016) explained that in qualitative research, trustworthiness is

established by the four components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. Through using a procedural method of coding, I was able to adhere to pre-established codes that supported my analysis of the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016).

**Credibility**

Yin (2106) explained that credibility in a research study is the guarantee that data are properly collected, analyzed, and interpreted in order to accurately reflect the findings and conclusions. To increase the credibility in my research study, I interviewed elementary school principals who are knowledgeable and have firsthand experience related to the research problem (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As each interview was conducted, it was recorded for transcription. All transcripts were shared with participants to provide an opportunity for descriptive validity. Thomson (2011) explained that descriptive validity increases the credibility of the study and reinforces the collaborative and ethical relationship with the participants. The transcripts strengthened the credibility of this study through coding and pulling quotes from them.

Data triangulation was used to strengthen the credibility of this research study through the compilation of the eight participants' responses, my memos, and observations gleaned throughout the interviews (Yin, 2016). Moreover, through my use of protocol coding or "a priori coding," preestablished codes directly aligned to the conceptual framework increased the credibility in the research study (Saldaña, 2016). Once the data were analyzed for codes, categories, and emerging themes, I increased the credibility of my findings by providing firsthand evidence in the form of quotes aligned to each research question and accompanying theme (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Finally, a peer reviewer who holds an Ed.D. in educational leadership and works at the elementary

school level provided feedback on my data analysis, interpretation, findings, and real-world application (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), as credibility focuses on how congruent the findings are with reality (Shenton, 2004).

**Transferability**

Transferability is the applicability of a qualitative research study's findings to other settings or situations (Yin, 2016). It is the researcher's responsibility to provide a thick description of the participants and the research process, thereby supporting the reader in determining whether the findings are transferable to their own locale (Korstjen & Moser, 2017). I provided a thick description of each participant through asking interview questions that reflect their background and experiences in the field of education (e.g., number of years as a principal, number of students enrolled in their school, average class size, number of teachers, number of non-tenured teachers, and Title I status based on free and reduced-price meals). That information, coupled with interview data reflecting each principal's knowledge, viewpoints, and choices, support the transferability of the study's research findings.

**Dependability**

Korstjen and Moser (2017) explained that dependability is the consistency and reliability in data collection, analysis, and reporting. To that end, I followed the procedures set forth by the Walden IRB to ensure dependability in my research study. Each interview was conducted virtually using the Microsoft Teams application and audio recorded using the Temi application and a digital voice recorder. The Temi application recorded and transcribed each interview, thus allowing me to focus on the participant and

capture the salient points (Lambert, 2012). After I checked the transcriptions for accuracy

by tracking the print as the audio played, a copy was e-mailed to the corresponding

principal to ensure accuracy through descriptive validity. Using a priori codes, I analyzed

the interview data to determine codes, open-codes, categories, and themes (Saldaña,

2016). Shenton (2004) explained that dependability is the ability for others to look at the

same data and yield comparable findings. As a result, Lincoln and Guba (1986) explained

that a researcher needs to use the strategy of completing and providing audit notes

including records of data, analysis, process notes, and instrument development. To that

end, throughout my research study I secured my audit notes inclusive of transcripts of the

eight interviews, multiple versions of data coding, digital audio transcripts, and research

findings as a part of an audit trail.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the validity of the data and interpretation of the findings

(Korstjen & Moser, 2017). In short, conformability emphasizes the need to ensure that

the results are of the participants' accounts and not preconceived thoughts or biases of the

researcher (Shenton, 2004). Throughout the research process, I reflected on my thoughts

and biases related to the work. As the supervisor of principals, I have strong feelings

about the topic of teacher retention and its impact on student achievement. Therefore, my

views and opinions may have influenced my interpretation of the data. As a result, I was

intentional in being aware of my biases (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the interviews were

being conducted and as I reviewed the transcripts and corresponding audio, I journaled

my biases using my fieldnotes. Using reflexive notes allowed me to capture intricate

details regarding the process. Additionally, I sought assistance from a peer reviewer who holds an Ed.D. in educational leadership to thoroughly review the codes, themes, and findings for logical development.

## Summary

This chapter provided a synopsis of the participant demographics, school demographic make-up, data collection instrument, inductive data analysis process, research findings, and evidence of trustworthiness. Four themes emerged from the data that addressed the three research questions: *intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs*; *building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs*; *communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding*; and *creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork*. The intersections of the four themes and the elements of the conceptual framework were illustrated via Tables 13 and 14. In Chapter 5, an interpretation of the findings, the study's limitations, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Teacher retention in the United States has been identified as an ongoing and increasing concern (Faremi, 2017; Toropova et al., 2021). Despite current retention strategies, a surge in the number of teachers leaving the teaching profession exists (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Hughes et al. (2014) noted that in order to mitigate teacher attrition, a principal's support of their teachers is both significant in inspiring teachers and imperative in promoting teacher retention. Moreover, Grissom and Bartanen (2018) explained that the quality of the support is a predictor of the ability to retain teachers. To that end, in this research study I addressed the problem of the lack of teacher retention strategies in the elementary school setting in a large, urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain how principals described their strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools. The conceptual framework I constructed for this research study paired Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership. This conceptual framework provided the foundation for the study and supported the explanation aligned to the phenomenon of the behaviors and actions of principals who work to retain teachers.

Three research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting?

RQ2: What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools did the principals identify?

RQ3: What leadership behaviors did  principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting?

The 16 interview questions were developed to gain valuable information from the participants to answer the research questions. Data obtained from the participants were analyzed beginning with a priori codes centered on Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Herzberg, 1966; Saldaña, 2016). Through the process of determining codes, open codes, categories, and themes, responses to the research questions emerged. Additionally, the patterns in the data assisted with understanding the principals' behaviors and strategies aligned to each theme.

Saldaña (2016) explained that qualitative research is not guaranteed to formulate a prescribed theory; however, key assertions materialize and offer a summative interpretation of the studies context. Key findings from this study revealed four themes that evolved into seven key assertions. The key assertions answered the three research questions by reflecting the support strategies that principals use to retain teachers. This includes challenges to retaining teachers and leadership behaviors used to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers. The themes of (a) intentional recognition of teachers' essential needs; (b) building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs; (c) communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding; and (d) creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork provided a broad paradigm. Consequently, the key assertions that were outcomes of the themes included building relationships, communication, supporting new

teachers, supporting tenured teachers, honesty, building a rapport, and

teamwork/collaboration.

## Interpretation of the Findings

The conceptual framework that grounded this study encompassed two theories,

Herzberg's (1966) motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership (Bass &

Riggio, 2006). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is composed of two factors:

motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are cultivated through fundamental conditions

of the job such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, growth, and the

work itself and produce positive satisfaction (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Hygiene

factors conversely are extrinsic to the work and appear in the form of organizational

commitment, supervision, relationships with peers and supervisors, work conditions,

salary, status, and security (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Herzberg's motivation-

hygiene theory supports the understanding that certain elements in the workplace

promote job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966).

Transformational leadership is an established theory in the field of education that

focuses on followers of the leader feeling a sense of trust, inspiration and respect; thus,

demonstrating allegiance to the leader (Bateh & Heyliger, 2014). Transformational

leadership contains four tenets, identified as the 4Is (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational

motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation). My interpretation of

the findings revealed specific strategies and behaviors principals employed to retain

teachers in the elementary school setting. The strategies and behaviors that emerged as an

outcome of this research study illustrated a direct link to many tenets found in both theories included in the conceptual framework.

**Results for Research Question 1**

The first research question was "What support strategies did principals identify as ones they use to retain teachers in their elementary school setting?" In alignment with Research Question 1, I found that the theme of principals building relationships with teachers to better understand and support teachers underscores the recognition of teachers' essential needs. When looking through the lens of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership, the themes identified from the data provided a global response to determining support strategies principals use to retain teachers in the elementary setting. Principals have an understanding that there is an association between job satisfaction and teacher retention (Lamb & Ogle, 2019). Hughes et al. (2015) conducted a study on teacher retention in hard-to-staff schools that confirmed the importance of the relationship between principals and teachers and the need for principals to provide emotional and environmental support to teachers. Furthermore, Hughes et al. revealed that support from principals has a critical and important impact on teacher retention. Glennie et al. (2016) additionally explained that when school leadership is supportive and present, teachers reported increased job satisfaction and a high chance of remaining in the field of education. In alignment, participants in my study acknowledged that building positive relationships with teachers was the leading strategy in teacher retention. As P1 explicitly noted, "The biggest things about being a school principal is in the relationships you build with your staff."

Additionally, P4 explained, "if you have allegiance to someone, you will know, if I trust you and we have that relationship, I'm going to stick it out with you." Furthermore, P7 emphasized that relationships are most important in supporting the retention of teacher, noting, "I think it's all relationships, a lot of it's relationships."

The theme of building relationships has a direct connection to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership. In Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, the relationship with one's supervisor is a hygiene factor and is considered extrinsic to the work. However, the theory reflects that relationship building does not cause satisfaction nor does it prevent dissatisfaction (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Warrier and Prasad (2018) revealed that contrary to what is predicted by the theory, hygiene factors play a significantly stronger role in predicting job satisfaction than motivators. Lucas (1985) found that the relationship between a supervisor and the employee was an important factor in work satisfaction (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Similarly, the findings from my study revealed that through building relationships with teachers, principals were better able to understand and support them. Therefore, a significant impact on job satisfaction and ultimately teacher retention was noted.

In alignment with transformational leadership, the component of individual consideration supports relationship building through emphasizing the importance of principals focusing on the needs and feelings of teachers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). P1 highlighted the need to understand each teacher's uniqueness and explained the importance of "recognizing that their needs are different." P8 noted, "We actually survey our teachers to find out what the needs are." P4 shared the impact of "making sure that

they know that I appreciate them and understand how hard their job is." Moreover, P2 provided a strategy with a caveat and noted, "The positive relationship comes from, you know, finding the good in everything, three positives to one suggest." Additionally, an intersection between relationship building and individual consideration was determined through the support strategy of coaching/mentoring teachers (Berkovich, 2016). P2 addressed the significance of coaching teachers and noted that the "Real-time, on the job embedded support that they get is critical." P5 echoed the sentiment and shared, "Visiting the classrooms, too is huge because then they can know how they're doing and I'm giving shout outs as much as possible." To that end, the strategy of coaching/mentoring in the form of feedback to teachers is one way individual consideration is reflected in relationship building.

In essence, my findings confirmed that building relationships was a key strategy that had a positive impact on teacher retention. Additionally, the association of this strategy with the transformational leadership theory reflects a connection to individual consideration, which emphasizes leaders demonstrating genuine concern for the needs and feelings of followers. Conversely, the finding of building relationships is contrary to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as Herzberg's theory notes it as a hygiene factor which should not have a significant impact on job satisfaction.

The second finding aligned to Research Question 1 is communication in the form of verbal and nonverbal cues. In looking through the lens of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership, I found that communication between principals and teachers was what aids in bridging the gap to building relationships. In my

study, P3 explicitly stated, "Communication is really important." P5 explained the

importance of principals "intentionally creating space to talk with them." Participants

collectively explained that keeping the lines of communication open, having an open-

door policy, and frequent teacher check-ins were vital strategies in supporting teacher

retention. Along the same lines, Ansley et al. (2019) examined the association between

teacher job satisfaction and positive interpersonal interactions with school administrators.

As a result, Ansley et al. noted that teachers desired ongoing communication and

constructive feedback from school administrators. P2 noted that in order to communicate

with teachers about their craft and provide feedback, "it's imperative that I visit their

classrooms every day, whether it's informal or if it's a formal process." Ronfeldt and

McQueen (2017) additionally conducted a study related to various induction supports and

found that supportive communication from school leaders was a strategy that yielded

increased teacher retention. This finding confirms that communication is a necessity and

a central strategy to employ in teacher retention efforts.

My findings aligned to communication were found to be inclusive of verbal and

nonverbal cues and contained components of both Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory

and the transformational leadership theory. In Herzberg's theory, communication is a

hygiene factor in the form of supervision and relationships. Converse to that theory, my

study uncovered that hygiene factors act as motivators, thus producing job satisfaction as

compared to only preventing dissatisfaction. Like the first finding of building

relationships, communication in this study acted as a motivator for teachers instead of a

hygiene factor in producing job satisfaction. In studies conducted by Fareed and Jan

(2016) and Warrier and Prasad (2018) on Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, it was found that hygiene factors are significantly correlated with increased job satisfaction. Similar to Fareed and Jan and Warrier and Prasad, my research study's findings additionally revealed that results aligned to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory can be inconsistent as compared to what is predicted according to the theory.

In alignment with the 4Is of transformational leadership, the tenet of inspirational motivation promotes the need for leaders to communicate effectively and inspire their teachers. As noted by Murphy (2018), leaders who lead with passion, enthusiasm, and inspiration are successfully able to communicate with the whole school community. P6 explained one strategy used to influence the total school staff and noted, "I end all of my staff meetings with something inspirational." Along the same lines, P4 shared the purposefulness of including "a positive quote or something to have the staff celebrate" in the weekly faculty newsletter. As an outcome of the virtual teaching and learning environment due to COVID-19, P5 explained, "I'll send them a text or I'll send them an email or I'll give them a call and just see how they're doing…in order to encourage them." As an outcome, the strategies implemented by principals that align to the tenet of inspirational motivation not only influence teacher retention but create open lines of communication with the total school community.

In summary, the findings centered on communication confirmed the importance of using this strategy to retain teachers in the elementary school setting. Both theories included in the conceptual framework generated components that aligned with the finding

that communication is vital to principals in their efforts to retain elementary school teachers.

Through my research study, I additionally found that the theme building teacher capacity through identifying and addressing individual needs aligns with Research Question 1 with an emphasis on implementing differentiated teacher supports. Using the conceptual framework inclusive of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational leadership theory, my findings illustrated that principals reported that they utilize different strategies for new and tenured teachers to build their capacity and retain them in the elementary setting. Principals explained that being cognizant of the diverse needs of novice teachers in comparison to experienced teachers is an important aspect in supporting teachers and teacher retention. This was precisely highlighted by P8, who explained that there are "Two different thought processes regarding your new teachers and your tenure teachers." As a result, key support strategies should vary based on the tenure of a teacher.

Participants in my research study clearly explained that new teachers require differentiated supports such as frequent check-ins, coaching, and additional resources as compared to tenured teachers. The literature reviewed in this research study directly confirms the need for differentiated support strategies for new teachers. Similar to what was found in my research study, Young (2018) detailed leadership strategies to support teacher retention for new teachers and explained that there is a need for differentiated approaches instead of a "one size fits all" method. Young clarified that strong emphasis must be placed on supporting new teachers as they are more apt to leave the profession at

the end of the first year if not provided with support. Likewise, Abitabile et al. (2019) conducted a roundtable discussion to operationalize teacher retention and found that principal efforts need to be focused on supporting new teachers, thus allowing them to feel that they are a valued member of the school community.

Gibbons et al. (2018) determined that incoming seasoned teachers cause less of a disruption to the staff as compared to new teachers. Ovenden-Hope et al. (2018) explained that expert teachers need support, professional development, time, and resources to perfect their craft. My research findings mirrored these sentiments as participants acknowledged that tenured teachers were focused more on perfecting their craft and building their leadership capacity. When describing supports for tenured teachers, P2 explicitly shared that it is imperative to differentiate professional development to meet the needs of experienced educators. P2 explained that the varied needs of tenured teachers have been met "through PLCs to individualize the learning for teacher needs as well for their capacity in the classroom." P4 additionally shared that leaders should give teachers "choice in a professional development." These key statements confirmed the need and desire of teachers in garnering professional development to meet their specific needs. Cemaloglu and Savas (2018) conducted a study to determine the relationship between the supportive behaviors of principals who provided varied professional development strands and teachers who took an active role in moving the school forward. A finding from this study reflected that principals who provided choice in professional development offerings to tenured teachers, especially in

the area of leadership development, empowered teachers and prepared them for

advancement or growth opportunities (Cemaloglu & Savas, 2018).

The finding that emphasized the need for differentiating teacher supports for new

teachers and tenured teachers included tenets of both Herzberg's motivation-hygiene

theory and transformational leadership. Differentiated teacher supports from Herzberg's

motivation-hygiene theory encompassed the tenets of achievement, the work itself,

responsibility, advancement, and growth. All of these components were motivators that

develop from the intrinsic conditions of the job and were suggested to yield job

satisfaction. In alignment, P1 shared an all-encompassing thought related to the needs of

new teachers verses tenured teachers and noted that "really recognizing that their needs

are different than our experienced teachers' needs" is a key factor in retaining teachers.

P8 echoed the aforementioned thought of P1 and shared that there are "Two different

thought processes regarding your new teachers and your tenured teachers…because they

are different and they need different things." Additionally, P6 inferred the need to

differentiate teacher supports and stated, "I think it's important that I meet with teachers

to check in with them, especially on new people." To that end, some participants in my

research study shared specific differentiated supports for new and tenured teachers in

alignment with the named tenets of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (e.g., choice in

professional development, providing grow opportunities, individual recognition, through

PLCs).

Likewise, all of the 4Is in the transformational leadership theory were included in

the finding of differentiated supports for new teachers and tenured teachers. P2

highlighted the component of idealized influence with a focus on instilling pride in the

followers through sharing, "try and make them feel good about their work." The

component of inspirational motivation, which focuses on effectively communicating, was

also noted as a differentiated teacher support. In this research study, effective

communication was emphasized by most of the participants in the form of providing

feedback. Specifically, P3 shared, "I feel like classroom feedback is like really

important." P3 and P6 additionally identified the importance of providing feedback and

shared alike comments. P3 explained the significance of "Feedback that helps them do

their job and makes their lives easier or just so they know where they stand." Equally, P6

stated, "I want to be able to provide feedback on, you know, what I'm seeing so far."

Individual consideration addresses the need for the principal to provide teachers

with coaching or mentoring. P1 stressed the necessity for teacher mentoring when asked

what teacher retention strategies work best. P1 attributed personal increased teacher

retention under her leadership as an outcome of coaching and mentoring and explained,

"I also think part of supporting them is that my original background was in training as a

teacher mentor. P6 echoed the views of P1 and shared, "I can support teachers in

developing them which I feel is important to retain teachers." P3 also noted the

importance of coaching and mentoring. However, P3 focused on garnering supports from

others to provide coaching/mentoring to teachers and shared, "we usually try to connect

them with a mentor within their team."

Finally, the component of intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to take

risks and think about advancement. P3 shared that a differentiated support for teachers is

that principals should "Praise them for taking risks." P7 also noted the importance of providing teachers with an "opportunity to grow in an area that maybe they haven't had an opportunity." To that end, to inspire followers to be committed to change based on a need, principals must implement differentiated supports to meet each teacher's unique needs to retain them.

**Results for Research Question 2**

The second research question was, "What challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools do the principals identify?" In alignment with Research Question 2, my findings revealed that communicating clearly to provide a shared understanding between the principal and teachers is imperative. When looking through the lenses of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and transformational leadership theory, the findings reflected that honesty and building a rapport were support strategies principals used to retain teachers in the elementary setting.

Honesty is synonymous with the ability to be truthful and relies on the integrity of the leader. Several principals in this research study noted the importance of being open and honest with teachers." P1 explained, "Being honest and having courageous conversations with people and knowing that 'what you see is what you get' and that you don't have other agendas, needs to be set from the very beginning." Principals additionally shared potential outcomes of not being honest with teachers. P6 shared that, "What I've learned is that if you're not honest up front about your school you can lose people as they need to know what they're signing up for." Similar to my study, Wang et al. (2019) conducted a study on how transformational leadership reduced the incidences

of work-related stress for kindergarten teachers. As an outcome, they found that leaders

exhibited integrity, including high levels of political and moral qualities; however, the

participants were not thorough in their messaging approach. Ansley et al. (2019)

examined the association between teacher job satisfaction and supportive school

administrators. Ansley et al.'s findings reflected that teachers desired to receive ongoing

commendations and recommendations about their teaching; thus, the authentic feedback

builds teacher capacity. Grissom and Bartanen (2018) echoed these sentiments and noted

that even in the absence of specific strategies, principals can attain a higher teacher

retention rate by providing authentic ongoing teacher feedback. To that end, the literature

confirmed my finding that it is vital for principals to be open and honest with teachers.

Honesty was identified as a hygiene factor and was embedded in the form of

supervision in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Tan (2013) explained that

supervision is a coordinative relationship in terms of trust, confidence, and respect

between leaders and followers. As with building relationships and communication,

honesty was identified within supervision, despite supervision being an extrinsic factor

which typically does not positively influence job satisfaction, per Herzberg's theory.

However, in my study, P2 shared the outcome of not being honest or truthful with

teachers and noted, "when you don't…establish that rapport to really have them build a

trusting relationship" teachers will not remain committed. P4 summed up the importance

of being honest with teachers and explained, "It's still about building those relationships

and having those honest conversations" that make the difference.

In the transformational leadership theory, honesty was found in idealized influence and individual consideration. A response provided by P4 demonstrated idealized influence in alignment with honesty. Principals must provide ongoing honest feedback to teachers, inclusive of recommendations. However, honest feedback should be provided in a manner that is morally appropriate, as highlighted by P4, who stated, "Supportive leadership rather than like the disciplinarian" yields more favorable outcomes. P6 additionally underscored the need to be honest and stated, "I think that part of my job is to not let us forget that there's a human element to what we do." As shared by Bateh and Heyliger (2014), transformational leadership embraces the theory that when the followers of a leader feel trust, respect, and allegiance for a leader, they are apt to align with the vision and mission of the leader.

In summary, honesty placed emphasis on the need for principals to be truthful and demonstrate integrity as the leader to retain teachers in their elementary schools. Literature from this study confirmed the importance of principals being open and honest with teachers. Both Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational leadership theory highlighted the importance of the principal demonstrating trust, confidence, loyalty, and respect.

Building a rapport directly mirrors building relationships and aligned with Research Question 1. To that end, principals should place a significant emphasis on building a rapport with teachers, thus aiding in the elimination of an obstacle to retaining teachers in their elementary schools. As explained in Research Question 1, a direct alignment between principals building a rapport with teachers and the conceptual

framework exists. My findings confirmed that principals must be cognizant and intentional regarding the need to build a rapport with teachers in order to support the mitigation of challenges to retaining teachers in their elementary schools.

**Results for Research Question 3**

The third research question was, "What leadership behaviors do principals use to create and maintain a school culture related to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting?" The theme of creating an environment of collaboration, open communication, and teamwork emerged in alignment with Research Question 3. The key assertions that emerged as findings in this study focused on teamwork and collaboration. Thus, these words were used interchangeability by participants. Tenets of both Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational leadership theory were embedded in the theme and reflected the behaviors that principals use to create and maintain a school culture that retains teachers in their elementary school. Teamwork and collaboration often materialized attached to relationships, thus supporting the school culture as related to retaining teachers in their elementary school. P5 noted, "Providing opportunities for teamwork, like having common planning times…just doing everything that you can to kind of promote as much of a positive environment as possible and promoting teamwork, too." This key assertion of teamwork/collaboration was additionally linked to communication. P7 shared, "Grade level meetings are an opportunity for us to get what people are concerned about and input." All participants explained how keeping the lines of communication open with teachers supported teamwork and collaboration.

Brown and Wynn (2007) explained that a pivotal role that the school principals play in the phenomenon of teacher retention is in providing collaboration and opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Ovenden-Hope et al. (2018) conducted a study on an early career teacher retention program. Findings from the study revealed that increasing participants' ability to work collaboratively provided a solid PLC. Likewise, Young (2018) detailed leadership strategies that can be implemented to support teacher retention and highlighted the approach of keeping grade level teams intact and allowing for collaboration through grade level planning. Therefore, my findings regarding teamwork and collaboration were substantiated, thus confirming that it was a leadership behavior that principals used to create and maintain a school culture to retain teachers.

Teamwork and collaboration were hygiene factors and had a direction association with relationships in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Tan (2013) explained that the tenet of relationships, as found in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, focus on work group interactions and co-workers' support. In my research study, P5 was passionate about the impact of teamwork and collaboration and shared, "when I hire, the one question I always ask is what is your philosophy on teamwork and how will you work with your team?" P6 also addressed the importance of providing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues and noted, "I think that fosters that sense of collaboration and teamwork that really builds a relationship." To that end, it can be determined that identical to teamwork and collaboration as found in this research study, the focus is on a team effort or partnerships. However, relationships are an extrinsic

factor in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and typically do not positively influence

job satisfaction. Therefore, this is contrary to what was expected based upon the tenets of

the motivation-hygiene theory.

In the transformational leadership theory, all components of the 4Is have a direct

intersection with teamwork and collaboration. Idealized influence supports teamwork and

collaboration through the principal's ability to model effective communication and

partnerships with the total school community. P2 provided a strategy that clearly

demonstrated the intersection of idealized influence and teamwork and collaboration as

related to teachers and explained, "I like to support them by telling them the positives that

I see…as a whole school." P5 also revealed that his communication strategy for retaining

teachers involved "Frequent check-ins with teachers providing opportunities for teachers

to share about supports they may need in the classroom and seeing what I could do to

provide those supports consistency with communication." Inspirational motivation

emphasizes the element of inspiring others through communication, as principals

motivate teachers through supporting their efforts in alignment with the vision. P2 added

a strategy aligned to teamwork and collaboration with the application of inspirational

motivation and noted, "So to try and make them feel good about their work, I recognize

every single person at some point in the year for something that they've done to…build a

relationship with someone." Individual consideration acknowledges teachers' feelings

and encourages principals to understand their needs both collectively and individually. P3

shared the significance of teamwork and collaboration but added a caveat and noted that

principals also need to "create a safe space for teachers to talk and give feedback and

maybe ask those questions that they don't want to ask in front of administration."

Furthermore, P3 explained that although teachers are encouraged to work as a team,

"allowing teachers to have more opportunities to share those best practices and things we

see happening in their classrooms" builds the capacity of all members of the team and

adds to their "toolbox." Finally, intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to be

innovative and creative, thus emphasizing the importance of principals providing space

for teachers to participate in critical thinking with other teachers about content, lesson

development, and lesson implementation. In alignment with the intersection of

intellectual stimulation and teamwork and collaboration, P6 explained, "I allow them to

have some autonomy over what it is that they really want to work on." P8 noted that she

provided "Vertical discussion where we read articles, we do learning walks or learn from

other teachers."

In summary, teamwork and collaboration were found to have a direct link to

relationships in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and intersect with all components

of transformational leadership. Juxtaposed against studies conducted by Brown and

Wynn (2007) and Ovenden-Hope et al. (2018), findings from this research study revealed

that increasing participants' ability to work collaboratively provided a solid PLC. P3

summarized that teamwork and collaboration are

>   about people feeling valued within the organization, but just allowing teachers to
>
>   have more opportunities to share those best practices and things we see happening
>
>   in their classrooms… not just giving them the feedback, but then allowing them

within their comfort level to share with either a small group or the larger group staff.

To that end, teamwork and collaboration were leadership behaviors that principals used to create and maintain a school culture to retain teachers.

## Limitations of the Study

This study included some limitations to the transferability of the findings. Yin (2015) explained that transferability in a qualitative research study is the generalization of the findings to other situations. Additionally, transferability is based on the reader's interpretation of the research findings (Burkholder et al., 2016). As explained in Chapter 1, only elementary principals participated in this research study. This limitation restricts the transfer of the findings to the middle and high school levels. Moreover, the participants in this research study led schools in only two out of three geographic areas of the school district, as I was not permitted to solicit participation from principals that I supervise. As a result, a variety of principals' viewpoints based on geographic area were not obtained. Along the same lines, another limitation of this research study in relation to transferability was the isolation of the study in one school district. Since my research study took place in a large urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States, transferability of findings to schools in rural areas is limited.

Yet another limitation of this research study was the sample size. My study included eight elementary principals in a school district with approximately 110 elementary principals and approximately 115,000 students. The limited number of participants could possibly influence the transferability of the findings.

Finally, demographic factors may have influenced the outcome and proved to be a limitation. Therefore, gender, age, or race of the principals were considered. Although a variety of principals were invited to participate in the interviews, a diverse racial sampling was not achieved.

## Recommendations

Retaining teachers within schools in the United States who are prepared to educate a diverse student population is an issue (Faremi, 2017). My research study addressed a gap in practice in the field of education in determining specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting. Through the lens of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the transformational leadership theory, practices that emerged as research findings were identified: (a) building relationships, (b) communication, (c) supporting new teachers, (d) supporting tenured teachers, (e) honesty, (f) building a rapport, and (g) teamwork/collaboration. I recommend that these findings be included in the course content for school-based leadership development programs when addressing the topic of job satisfaction in alignment with teacher retention. To mitigate the immediate concern regarding teacher attrition in the large urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States in which this study was conducted, I recommend that professional development strands inclusive of the findings be provided to current school principals and assistant principals to ensure that they are cognizant of the strategies and behaviors that are the most successful in addressing teacher retention in the elementary school setting.

Recommendations for further research aligned to retaining teachers in their elementary school setting include:

- conducting interviews with practicing elementary teachers who continue to teach,

- conducting exit interviews to explore teacher retention through the lens of elementary teachers,

- determining why the teachers left the district or profession,

- organizing a roundtable discussion with other school administrators on administrative strategies and behaviors to address teacher retention (Abitabile et al., 2019),

- conducting a study with an increased number of participants to garner additional perspectives on strategies and behaviors that principals employ to retain teachers,

- replicating this research study in an alternate school district to establish if the findings would mirror findings from this study, and

- focusing on the perspectives of teachers with over five years of experiences to glean what components of job satisfaction they attribute to helping them decide to remain in the profession of teaching (Lamb & Ogle, 2019).

### Implications

Garcia and Weiss (2019) explained that the teacher shortage is real, vast, and increasing at a rate worse than ever expected. To that end, principal support of teachers is vital in promoting teacher retention (Hughes et al., 2014). The findings from this research

study reflect that principals understand that there is a connection between teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention and use this as a goal in the sustainability of high-quality teachers (Shaw & Newton, 2014). Moreover, the findings from my research study may result in positive social change for students, teachers, and elementary school principals.

First, students are the most important stakeholders within schools (Shaw & Newton, 2014). Therefore, educators must ensure that they have an optimal education to meet the demands of society. Social change can be produced by implementing the findings of my study. Principals will be able to provide equity to students by staffing every classroom with quality teachers. Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) explained that staffing schools nationwide with quality teachers is imperative in producing globally competitive students.

Along the same lines, Hughes (2012) explained that when teachers receive the kind of support that inspires them, they keep teaching, and the retention is sustained. As an outcome, the key findings in my research study provide principals with strategies and behaviors that will positively influence teacher retention, thus fostering positive social change.

Finally, McIntosh et al. (2016) noted that specific retention strategies used to keep teachers are important for school-based principals as they provide consistency and sustainability in teaching and learning. My study directly addresses this assertion and yielded findings that fill the gap and explicitly reflect strategies and behaviors that elementary principals use to retain teachers. The potential social change addresses

teachers' job satisfaction which in turn ensures teachers are fulfilled and able to carry out the multiple tasks associated with teaching.

## Conclusion

With a continually declining pool of teachers and a decreasing number of people participating in teacher education programs, the lack of teacher retention strategies in the elementary school setting in a large urban-suburban school district in the Eastern United States is a critical concern (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Determining specific strategies for retaining teachers in the elementary school setting is important for school-based principals as it provides consistency and sustainability in teaching and learning (McIntosh et al., 2016). The results of my research study provided seven key findings in the form of strategies and behaviors that principals are encouraged to use to retain elementary teachers. The identified strategies and behaviors include (a) building relationships, (b) communication, (c) supporting new teachers, (d) supporting tenured teachers, (e) honesty, (f) building a rapport, and (g) teamwork/collaboration.

It is imperative that schools are staffed with quality teachers to support students (Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Therefore, principals are charged with ensuring job satisfaction for teachers. Podolsky et al. (2016) explained that principals have the power to implement supports that will be the determining factor in teachers staying or leaving the profession. As an outcome of this research study, I charge principals with employing the findings to positively influence teacher retention. Now that the findings have been identified, I echo the words of Dr. Maya Angelo: "When we know better, we do better."

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Appendix: Interview Guide and Protocol

Interview protocol

Welcome

- Discuss the purpose of the study

- Discuss interview procedure as well as the recording process

- Demographic information will be discussed

- The interview will proceed

Date of interview:
Time:
Interview Code #: _____
Location of Interview: _____

| Parts of the Interview | Interview Questions |
|---|---|
| Introduction | - Hello _____Thank you very much for participating in this research study designed to determine principal strategies for retaining teachers at elementary schools in this school district.<br><br>- This interview session should last about one hour as noted in my email to you. After the interview, I will be examining your answers and analyzing the data. As a follow-up, I will be providing you with the opportunity to make corrections and changes to my notes by reviewing the transcripts.<br><br>- Please note that I will not identify you in my documents, and no one will be able to identify you with your answers. You can choose to stop this interview at any time. Also, I need to let you know that this interview will be recorded for transcription. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Do you have any questions?<br><br>• Are you ready to begin? |
| Demographic questions | Can you please share with me the following?<br><br>• Number of years you have worked in the school district<br><br>• Number of years in your present school<br><br>• Is your school a Title 1 school (FARMs rate)?<br><br>• Demographics of school population served and percentage of ELLs and Special Education students<br><br>• What is the total number of teachers?<br><br>• How many are non-tenured?<br><br>• What is the average class size? |
| Question 1 | What are specific strategies or approaches that you use to retain your teachers? What strategies work best? Which do not work well? |
| Question 2 | How do you show teachers that you support them? |
| Question 3 | What strategies do you use to motivate and inspire your teachers? |
| Question 4 | How do you create positive relationships with teachers? |
| Question 5 | What structures do you have in place that allows teachers to ask questions or receive guidance from you? |
| Question 6 | What methods do you use to communicate with your teachers? |

| Question 7 | What structures do you have in place to ensure that teachers have a sense of security in the workplace? |
|---|---|
| Question 8 | How do you ensure that teachers have the resources they need to complete their job? |
| Question 9 | What are strategies that you use to support positive relationships between co-workers? |
| Question 10 | How do you support teacher advancement? |
| Question 11 | What strategies do you employ to build teacher capacity? |
| Question 12 | How do you offer leadership opportunities? |
| Question 13 | How do teachers have opportunities to be a part of the decisions making process in your school? |
| Question 14 | What are ways that teachers can be innovative in your school? |
| Question 15 | Is there something that you have heard about and would like to try in your school? |
| Question 16 | What aspect of teacher retention might it support? |
| Open Question | This is the end of my questions. Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to share? |
| Close | Thank you very much for your insight on specific principal strategies for retaining teachers in elementary schools in this school district, and for participating in this interview. As a reminder, the results of this interview will be incorporated into a project for my research but will be kept confidential outside of that context. I will be contacting you within the next week to provide you with an opportunity to ensure the accuracy of the transcript through descriptive validity, as I shared with you previously. Your participation is greatly appreciated. |