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Teachers' Perspectives on Remaining in a Rural School With Poor Teacher Retention Rates

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Rates

by

Amanda Ginn

EdS, Walden University, 2019

MA, Walden University, 2016

BS, Emmanuel College, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Teachers have a higher yearly turnover rate than all other occupations. Retention issues are of major concern in rural U.S. schools, where it can be challenging to retain highly qualified teachers. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. The conceptual framework included Day and Gu's resilience theory and Maslow's theory of motivation. Data were collected from 12 rural elementary teachers through individual Zoom or phone interviews. The research question focused on teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in schools in the Southeast United States. A total of 12 rural elementary teachers having 10 to 30 plus years of experience in rural school districts in the Southeast United States shared their perspectives in semistructured interviews. Open and axial coding were used to analyze data. Through thematic analysis, four primary themes emerged: (a) teachers described inconsistency among school staff, (b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom, (c) teachers used various strategies to help them remain in the classroom, and (d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support. Despite the poor teacher retention rates in their schools, participants felt teaching was a rewarding and fulfilling profession. The study findings have the potential to create positive social change by providing administrators with the perspective of rural teachers who have remained in rural schools with poor retention rates. Further research on teachers' perspectives of remaining in the classroom with an emphasis on teacher relationships and support is recommended.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my mother, Joan Pocus. She was the driving force behind me furthering my education. My mother always dreamed of becoming an English professor and attempted to return to college later in life. However, life-altering situations prevented her from continuing. My mother was by my side when I began this journey, but unfortunately Jesus called her home. My mother fought cancer for several years. She was there to listen and support me during my struggles with working full-time and continuing my education. My mother left a legacy. I am the woman, educator, mother, and wife I am today because of her. I love you Mom!

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I would like to thank my husband, Britt Ginn, for being a solid rock for our family while I finished my dissertation. Thank you for always encouraging me to follow my dreams and providing me a shoulder to cry on during the most challenging days. I would also like to thank my children, Kaleigh, Ivey, JD, and Georgia, for stepping in and offering to help when we needed it the most. Whether it was housework or making sure someone was picked up from practice, you guys were always there. I am so thankful God chose me to be your mom.

I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Terri Edwards, Dr. Amie Beckett, and Dr. Barbara Schirmer. I would especially like to thank Dr. Edwards for her encouragement and her ability to make you believe in yourself. Her guidance and sweet voice helped me on many challenging days, when I was ready to give in. I will be forever thankful that God allowed our paths to cross.

Lastly, I am thankful for Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. I am thankful for His unveiling love and devotion. Without Jesus I would be nothing. I owe Him everything because He gave His life so I could live. I thank Jesus for giving me the strength and perseverance to complete my dissertation. I want to thank Jesus for allowing me the opportunity to interact and develop lifelong friendships with many amazing individuals at Walden University.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

According to Ash et al. (2017), understanding why teachers leave or remain in education is a key component for advancement in teacher retention. Teachers' perspectives on remaining in the rural classroom may provide a deeper understanding of how they are able to persist. Most research on teacher retention has been overshadowed by increasing teacher attrition rates (Glazer, 2020). In the last 30 years, teacher attrition rates in the United States have increased significantly (Glazer, 2020). Retaining teachers in education is vital to student success (Badgett et al., 2019; Hammonds, 2017). Teacher attrition can result in unfavorable student achievement outcomes (Glazer, 2020).

Since 1989, teacher attrition rates in the United States have risen by 50% and have remained consistently close to 8% (Badgett et al., 2019). By 2024, the United States will need to generate 375,000 novice teachers yearly to replenish teachers who are leaving the profession early or retiring (Ash et al., 2017). Teachers who remain in the classroom express a keenness and love for teaching and a strong sense of determination (Dell'Angelo & Richardson, 2019). Little understanding exists of the trials seasoned teachers face and how they maintain their obligation to teaching (Chiong et al., 2017).

Teachers throughout the United States face the challenging mission of developing students who will transform the U.S. economy to contend with the world market while working extensive hours with little pay, restricted autonomy, and poor societal standing (Haug et al., 2020). Persistent teachers who remain resilient and motivated in the classroom may provide valuable insight into how school districts and leaders can increase poor teacher retention rates.

The findings from the current study have the potential to create positive social change by offering insight into what teachers think is needed to improve poor teacher retention rates. Teacher perspectives on how they remain resilient and motivated may encourage school leaders to give teachers a voice in how to improve teacher retention rates. A deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives may equip administrators, policymakers, teachers, and district leaders with the knowledge to improve and create professional learning that inspires teachers to remain in the classroom.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to this basic qualitative study. The conceptual framework included Day and Gu's (2014) resilience theory and Maslow's (1943) motivation of needs. The research question presented in Chapter 1 guided the virtual one-to-one teacher interviews. The nature of the study section contains an overview of the qualitative method, and the definition section clarifies the terminology used throughout this study. Chapter 1 also includes the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

Increases in teacher turnover place costly burdens on schools and districts (Bradford & Kamrath, 2020). Urban and high poverty rural schools in the United States have the most severe teacher scarcities (Carver-Thomas et al., 2016; Smith & Tran, 2019). Nationwide, 40% of rural schools face serious teacher shortages in every subject area, with numerous vacancies created by persistent turnover at a rate greater than other geographical locations (Harrison & Tran, 2019). Greater emphasis has been placed on the challenges of urban schools, while rural schools with similar difficulties have been

overlooked (Smith & Tran, 2019). Poor teacher retention presents obstacles for policymakers, district leaders, and principals.

According to Bonato (2019), teachers leave the profession because of isolation and lack of support. Other reasons include lack of influence and voice, curriculum restraints, surges in standardized testing, and the nonexistence of respect and trust for their profession (Bartell et al., 2019). Placing importance only on why teachers exit the profession prematurely neglects the views of teachers who persist in the classroom and their lived experiences. Motivated, qualified teachers who remain in the classroom can share insight and experiences that may assist teachers in their adaptation to the profession. There is a need to understand the factors that help teachers persist in the classroom (Chiong et al., 2017). Teachers who remain in the classroom may provide district leaders and principals with professional development and a deeper understanding of how to improve teacher retention. Throughout their careers, teachers encounter highs and lows because of personal and work changes in their lives (Mommers et al., 2018). Teacher motivation is a key component of building a dynamic school culture (Durham et al., 2018). Teacher quality and consistency directly impact student achievement creating a need to explore teachers' perspectives regarding why they persist (Durham et al., 2018).

Problem Statement

Within the first 5 years of teaching, 30% of teachers exit the field (Dell'Angelo & Richardson, 2019). The problem is that although there is consistent research on teacher retention, teachers who remain in the rural classroom in schools with poor retention rates have not had the opportunity to share their perspectives regarding why they persist.

Teaching is a stressful profession with levels of stress compared to those encountered by police officers, social service workers, and paramedics (Koenig et al., 2018). Teachers who can persist in this type of environment may provide valuable insight into their influence on student achievement and their perseverance. Sustaining and hiring experienced teachers creates a significant difference in student success (Young, 2018).

Teachers have a higher yearly turnover rate than all other occupations (Young, 2018). Retention issues are of major concern in rural schools, where it can be challenging to retain highly qualified teachers (Harrison & Tran, 2019). The adverse effects of teacher turnover and shortages of highly qualified teachers are felt mostly in rural, high-minority, high-poverty, and low-achieving schools (Franks, 2019). One of the strongest predictors of teacher retention among U.S. data is a teacher's ability to take part in decision making, quality leadership, autonomy, and a setting that supports teacher collaboration (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Torres, 2018).

The knowledge and skills that seasoned teachers can offer to education should be considered (Carrillo & Flores, 2018). Faithful, experienced teachers offer understanding into how they are able to remain dedicated and driven over time and create knowledge to encourage a long and effective career in education (Carrillo & Flores, 2018). A review of the literature indicated a lack of knowledge about teachers' perspectives of remaining in a rural school. According to Carrillo and Flores (2018), there is much to understand and learn from the careers of teachers who persist in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. There is a considerable amount of research on teacher attrition, yet minimal research exists on teacher perspectives of remaining in the classroom (Salin & Whipp, 2018). To retain teachers, value and respect must be given to their knowledge, experiences, and professional significance (Kolman, 2017). Teacher perspectives and how they interpret the social world around them may provide a deeper understanding of their behavior.

According to P. Hughes (2020), a paradigm is how people view the world and arrange it into a coherent whole. A research paradigm frames the research topic and influenced how the study is viewed (P. Hughes, 2020). An interpretivist approach provided a deeper understanding of how teachers interpret their circumstances and experiences within the social world and the meaning it has for them (P. Hughes, 2020). Using an interpretivist approach, I explored participants socially formed, shared, and negotiated meanings and externalized them as theories of human behavior (see P. Hughes, 2020). The knowledge gained from participants was authentic and in-depth, providing an understanding of why teachers remain in the rural classroom. According to Kelchtermans (2017), to understand teachers' lived experiences or decisions to stay or leave the profession, a researcher needs to unravel the emotional and moral dimensions. Researchers have examined why teachers leave the profession (Dinning et al., 2018; Franks, 2019; Santoro, 2019). By studying the perspectives of teachers who have remained in the classroom, I sought to provide school districts, administrators, and

stakeholders with a better understanding of the resilience and motivation needed for teacher persistence.

Research Question

What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in schools in the Southeast United States?

Conceptual Framework

The resilience theory (Day & Gu, 2014) and Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation provided the conceptual framework for this study. Resilience in teachers correlates with their daily ability to maintain educational commitments and effectively take care of the inevitable uncertainties in their careers (Beltman et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, resilience was defined as a concept that is relative, dynamic, and developmental, implying the positive adaptation and progress of individuals in the presence of adverse situations (see Day & Gu, 2014).

The resilience theory was pertinent to this study because teachers experience demanding situations throughout their careers that can influence their well-being, retention, effectiveness, and ability to meet the needs of their students (see Camacho et al., 2018). Shifting the focus from teacher burnout and stress to teacher resilience provided understanding to how teachers handle and maintain their commitment and motivation in times of change (see Day & Gu, 2007). Teachers face challenging and stressful situations daily. Many individuals' abilities to be resilient are developed in their everyday habits (Aguilar, 2018). Resilient teachers display successful strategies for

working with challenging students and develop greater fulfillment in their work

(Bradford & Kamrath, 2020).

In this study, I explored how teachers who remain in the rural classroom adapt to the difficulties in their profession. Examining persistent teachers provided understanding of how they manage the challenges of the job and sustain their ability to be resilient (see Beltman et al., 2018). Gu (2014) implied that it is more profitable and educationally more meaningful to place a greater emphasis on the factors that help teachers who decide to stay and remain committed to the learning of students. Resilient teachers who maintain their commitment, motivation, and effectiveness despite difficult working conditions may provide policymakers and school leaders with approaches to retaining highly qualified teachers (Day & Gu, 2007).

The foundation of Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation relates to the unfulfilled needs of human beings. Maslow's theory was vital to the current study because it helped me identify what motivates teachers to remain in the classroom. According to Maslow's theory of motivation, any motivated behavior, either consummatory or preparatory, is assumed to be a channel through which basic needs are voiced or satisfied. Human motivation centers on individuals looking for satisfaction and changes through individual development (Maslow, 1943; McLeod, 2020). In the current study, the different levels of motivational needs depicted the aspects of teaching that motivate teachers to remain in the classroom. Maslow's (1943, as cited in Fisher & Royster, 2016) stages of human needs people encounter when faced with a new stage of life applied directly to a teacher's career. Maslow's theory helped me clarify the factors that influence teachers to stay in

the classroom for 10 or more years. The esteem level of Maslow's theory is relative to

teaching because this level is a motivator for teacher performance. A teacher's desire for

self-fulfillment during the self-actualization level is necessary for their persistence in the

teaching profession.

The framework for this study centered on resilience and motivation, which were

essential for understanding teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom.

The framework provided a foundation for a qualitative approach to building a deeper

understanding of the phenomenon of teachers remaining in the classroom. The

framework supported a qualitative approach for data collection and interpretation. One-

to-one interviews were used to allow teachers to share their experiences and

understandings of remaining in the rural classroom. Thematic analysis was used to

identify categories and themes that answered the research question. In Chapter 2, I

provide a more comprehensive review of the conceptual framework.

Nature of the Study

In this basic qualitative study, I identified teachers' perspectives of remaining in

the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Qualitative researchers study people in

their natural settings, trying to understand phenomena in relation to the meaning people

bring to them (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). In the current study, the phenomenon was teacher

retention, and the object was teachers' perspectives on remaining in the rural classroom.

Participants were purposefully selected. According to Babbie (2017), purposeful

sampling is a type of sampling in which the most useful and representative population

observed is selected.

Purposeful sampling can create a detailed understanding of the object and allow for the selection of participants with specific attributes. Using purposeful sampling, I invited teachers who have remained in the classroom 10 or more years to participate in this study. Rural teachers from the Southeast United States were identified through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling can be beneficial in finding populations in which members are connected (Check & Schutt, 2012). Data for the current study included Zoom and phone interviews with 12 qualified teachers. By using semi structured interviews, I was able to better understand each participants' perspective of remaining in the classroom.

Collecting qualitative data should be rigorous, systematic, and intentional (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). The primary goal of qualitative interviews is to gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). I used qualitative interviews to gather data and gain insight into the meaning that teacher participants gave to their lived experiences. The interviews included in-depth, open-ended, semi structured questions. I followed an interview protocol with specific questions to structure and guide the interviews. I used tailored and unique conversational direction with each participant (see Carl & Ravitch, 2016).

Data analysis is a central aspect of validity and a critical component of qualitative research. Coding allows the researcher to create phrases that make meaning and link data to ideas (Saldana, 2016). Coding provides a short phrase or word that assigns a prominent, essence-capturing, cumulative or expressive, evocative attribute to data (Saldana, 2016). Open coding was used to provide cycles of reading to summarize,

highlight, and code portions of the text (see Carl & Ravitch, 2016). Axial coding is a process of moving from the coding portion of data analysis to the beginning to see how the codes come together into clusters or coding categories (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). A broader code set was created and investigated to develop a precise and narrow list of codes. The use of code definitions (short descriptions for each code) helped me distinguish their meaning and distinctness from other codes (see Carl & Ravitch, 2016). Thematic analysis was used to develop themes in the data and to answer the research question (see Carl & Ravitch, 2016). Thematic analysis is an adaptable method that allows the researcher to center on the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis involves noting differences, similarities, and relationships in the data (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). To generate validity within a study, the researcher must be transparent in the documenting and processes of how themes develop (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). The data for the current study came from Zoom and phone interviews with 12 rural elementary teachers in the Southeast United States. In qualitative analysis, the researcher should thoroughly examine the collected data by reading and rereading the transcripts of interviews and other textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Definitions

The list of definitions addressed key terms used throughout the study to clarify the contextual meaning of each term.

Esteem for self: An individual's assessment and approval for their personality or nature and the associated feelings of one's value, worth, or importance as a person (Gao & Taormina, 2013).

Esteem from others: The personal assessment from others about an individual's character or nature and their related feelings about the individual's merit, value as a person, and worthiness (Gao & Taormina, 2013).

Motivation: A term used to explain why people act as they do and what elements influence this activity, including external or internal socialization influences (Sale, 2020).

Resilience: A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

Rural schools: Schools more than 25 miles from an urban area and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Teacher attrition: Qualified teachers who leave the profession for reasons other than retirement (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Teacher resilience: The capacity to manage the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in the realities of teaching (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Teacher retention: Maintaining teachers in the profession (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Teacher self-efficacy: The degree to which a teacher believes they can affect performance in particular areas and for all students (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

Assumptions

The central focus of this research was to identify teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. The setting of the study was rural counties in the Southeast United States. I assumed all 12 participants would be honest about their school location concerning urban clusters. I also assumed that participants would be authentic and open in their responses throughout the interview and

accurately reveal their perspectives, beliefs, and educative stance. In addition, I assumed

participants would share any health impairments or issues that would impact their

participation and ability to respond. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), there needs to

be justification for an assumption and logic of why it is acceptable to hold the

assumption. An additional assumption was teachers who participated would have the

necessary certification and qualifications. Finally, I assumed that participants would

voluntarily be responding to this study to better understand teachers' perspectives on

remaining in the rural classroom.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this basic qualitative study was teachers' perspectives of remaining

in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Improved understanding of

teachers' perspectives of remaining in the classroom may increase awareness of teachers'

adaptations and experiences in developing resilience and the motivation needed to persist

in a school with poor teacher retention rates. Transferability was established using rich

descriptions of teachers along with purposeful sampling. The population included 12

rural elementary teachers who had remained in the classroom for 10 or more years.

Teacher participants' credentials varied both in advanced degrees and teaching

experience. One-to-one Zoom and phone interviews were conducted due to the COVID-

19 pandemic and per Walden University guidelines. To ensure participant confidentiality,

all data were stored in a secure filing cabinet and a computer with secure passwords. All

ethical codes and regulations were followed to guarantee confidentiality.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses in a study and must be stated along with a description of the steps for reducing them (Burkholder et al., 2016). I explored the perspectives of 12 rural elementary teachers who had remained in the classroom for 10 or more years and worked in a school with poor teacher retention. A possible limitation included participant availability due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers were managing their normal duties, along with teaching in-person, virtual, and quarantined students, therefore limiting their availability. To address this limitation, I provide participants a wide range of interview times. For participant convenience, I also provided a choice between Zoom or phone interviews.

As a former elementary teacher, my personal views about remaining in the elementary classroom could have led to bias. To address this limitation, I set aside all bias and directed my attention to the collection and interpretation of the data during the virtual interviews. Using a reflective journal, I documented my thoughts and any bias that developed during the data collection and analysis process.

Significance

In this study, I explored teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Participants were given the opportunity to speak about the resilience and motivation that elementary teachers need in rural school districts with poor teacher retention rates. Successfully retaining teachers is vital to making sure there is an adequate number of qualified and dedicated teachers to staff the country's schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Despite the negative factors involved in

teaching, many educators are motivated to remain in the classroom (Haug et al., 2020). Research on teachers who have remained in the classroom provides insight into teacher resilience and why, after years in the classroom, some teachers still find a sense of accomplishment and purpose (Carrillo & Flores, 2018).

Teachers can promote teacher resilience by sharing their personal stories of resilience with coworkers (Hughes, 2019). When teachers share their lived experiences of resilience, they empower others to persist and remain in the profession (Hughes, 2019). Teachers are a critical component for improving student learning outcomes and experiences (Liao, 2019). Listening to practicing teachers provided an understanding of the type of support that might help them remain in education (Burgess et al., 2018).

The findings of the current study have the potential to create positive social change through identifying how teachers adapt to difficult situations and their everyday experiences in which they display resilience and motivation in the classroom despite the poor teacher retention rate at their school. Teachers who have remained in the classroom face many struggles but have successfully learned how to persist despite the difficulties of teaching in a rural school district with numerous needs. Findings from teachers in this study may help administrators and schools recruit and retain teachers who are willing to persist and influence the education of the students in their rural communities. This study may help novice teachers unfamiliar with rural schools have a deeper understanding of the characteristics of a rural school setting and the values and beliefs of the community members.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I focused on the purpose of this basic qualitative study: to identify teachers' perspectives of remaining in a rural school in the Southeast United States. There is an ample amount of research on teacher attrition (Ashby & Rood, 2020). However, there is inadequate research on teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom. Teachers who have remain resilient and motivated as they continue in the classroom provided valuable insight into how they persist when many teachers choose to leave. The background of this study detailed the effect teacher retention has on the profession, and how teachers who have remained in the classroom contribute to positive social change in education. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth literature review of scholarly articles used to support the need to identify teachers' perspectives of remaining in a rural school in the Southeast United States.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In Chapter 2, I examine literature relevant to teachers' perspectives of remaining in the classroom and teacher retention. The focus includes teacher perspectives, teacher retention, resilient teachers, and motivated teachers. Existing literature on teacher attrition overshadows that of teacher retention, creating a need for research on resilient and motivated teachers' who persist in the classroom.

In this chapter, I examine current literature on the individual and related factors that impact teachers' decisions to stay in the classroom. This literature review addressed the effects of teacher retention and teacher attrition on the teaching profession. I established a basis for research on teachers who remain in the classroom in rural districts identified as having significantly poor teacher retention rates.

Literature Search Strategy

For the literature review, I used the Walden University library to obtain primary findings from the following databases to conduct an in-depth search of the literature: ERIC, ProQuest, Education Source, SAGE Journals, EBSCO, Science Direct, Taylor & Frances Online, and PsycINFO. I also used Google Scholar to identify peer-reviewed journals. Search terms included *teacher retention*, *resilience theory*, *teacher motivation*, *teacher perspectives*, *teacher attrition*, *motivation theory*, *teacher self-efficacy*, *teacher job satisfaction*, *qualitative research*, *intrinsic and extrinsic motivations*, and *teacher voices*. Scholarly journals published from 2016 to 2020 were examined to identify pertinent information for this study. To understand the conceptual framework and teachers' perspectives, I accessed books related to the topic through Google books.

Conceptual Framework

Resilience Theory

The conceptual framework for this study focused on Day and Gu's (2014) resilience theory and Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation. Day and Gu examined how resilient teachers become teachers of quality over time. According to Day and Gu (2014), resilience supports teachers' professional identity, builds a quality teaching staff, and keeps teachers' commitment to teaching well. Resilience is the capacity to sustain balance and a sense of agency and commitment in everyday teaching (Day & Gu, 2013). Resilience is a relative, dynamic, and developmental construct highlighting the positive adaptation and development of individuals during difficult situations (Day & Gu, 2014). A teacher's capability and aspirations to teach are influenced by the degree to which they positively adapt to their careers (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Several factors have been suggested that may impact teacher resilience, such as emotional competence, optimism, self-belief, a sense of purpose, and intrinsic motivation (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). The contextual impacts related to teacher adaptation include participation in the decision-making process, school culture, support from coworkers, and interactions with administration (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Researchers noted that positive adaptation indicators in teachers are low levels of burnout and increased levels of job satisfaction and well-being (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

According to Day and Gu (2014), teacher resilience encompasses three distinguishing characteristics. The first characteristic of teacher resilience is context specific in that teachers' resilient attributes are better understood by taking in a broader

view of career work, the classroom context, and the individual school (Day & Gu, 2014).

Positive relationships with administrators, colleagues, and students can provide support

for teachers during difficult times. The second characteristic of teacher resilience is role

specific in that it closely connects with the conviction and strength of teachers'

professional commitment (Day & Gu, 2013). This inner calling to the commitment to

serve and teach sets the teaching profession apart from many other occupations and jobs

(Day & Gu, 2014). Teacher perspectives of self-efficacy and whether they can effectively

assist student learning and achievement are significant factors impacting teacher'

resilience (Day & Gu, 2014). A teacher's efficacy views impact the teacher's motivation,

commitment, and the educational process (Bjorklund et al., 2020). Resilient teachers

exhibit an aptitude for fulfillment and growth (Day & Gu, 2014).

The last characteristic of teacher resilience is the capacity to sustain a sense of

commitment, balance, and efficiency in the daily domain in which teachers teach (Day &

Gu, 2014). Teacher resilience means more than bouncing back effectively and swiftly

from painful experiences; resilience also includes the ability to sustain balance and a

sense of commitment and efficiency in the society in which teachers teach (Day & Gu,

2014). Resilient teachers can turn trials into learning experiences, embrace uncertainty,

and draw from revitalizing experiences (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Teacher resilience is significant in teaching for three reasons (Day & Gu, 2007).

Firstly, it is not easy to expect students to be resilient if their teacher, who is a positive

influence, does not demonstrate resilient qualities (Day & Gu, 2007). Second, teaching is

challenging in an evolving age of sustainability and diversity (Day & Gu, 2007). A

transformation in emphasis from teacher retention, burnout, and stress to resilience

delivers an encouraging perspective to comprehend the methods teachers use to maintain

their dedication and motivation in times of change (Day & Gu, 2007). Third, resilience

means the ability to bounce back or recover energy swiftly and effectively in the face of

adversity (Day & Gu, 2007). Resilience is closely connected to a strong sense of self-

efficacy, motivation, and vocation to teach, which are essential to fostering success in all

areas of students' lives (Day & Gu, 2007).

Maslow's Theory of Motivation

The second theory that supported this study's conceptual framework was

Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation. Maslow's theory of motivation is concerned with

an individual's motivational needs and the order they are satisfied (Kafumbu, 2019).

There are factors known as motivators that convey a sense of job satisfaction

(Abdulrahman & Hui, 2018). Motivators include autonomy, intrinsic aspects, recognition,

and achievement (Abdulrahman & Hui, 2018). Maslow (1943) stressed that individuals

have a natural desire to be self-actualized, implying individuals want to be all they can

be. For individuals to reach the self-actualization stage, basic needs must be met

(Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) created five motivational needs arranged in a pyramid

from lowest to most significant. The needs include physiological, safety, belonging,

esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The physiological level includes meeting

basic needs such as hunger, thirst, and breathing (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow

(2013), a desire fulfilled is no longer a desire. Once the physiological needs are satisfied,

a new set of needs must be met, known as safety needs (Maslow, 2013). Safety needs are

necessary for teachers to flourish and feel secure within their school environment. Once the safety needs are adequately satisfied, a need arises for love (Maslow, 2013).

During the belonging level, teachers need to feel acceptance and belonging among their peers. Cherry (2019) noted that emotional affiliation prompts human performance. The fourth level of Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation is the esteem level. This level consists of two components: esteem for self and esteem from others (Maslow, 2013). At this level, individuals encounter achievements or status from others or themselves (Maslow, 2013). Teacher recognition during the esteem level may lead to an increase in teacher motivation. Self-gratification needs include a feeling of worth, strength, self-confidence, capability, and adequacy of being necessary and useful in the world (Maslow, 2013).

The final level in Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation is self-actualization. During this level, people are interested in their individual growth (Maslow, 2013). Although all the needs may be met in Maslow's theory, individuals practicing what they were not tailored for may experience unhappiness or dissatisfaction (Maslow, 2013). School leaders who observe and assess teachers' motivational needs and understand them may see greater job satisfaction among teachers.

Literature Review

The background section in Chapter 1 included recent research relating to the study's purpose to provide an overview of the theories, beliefs, and meaningful literature. In Chapter 2, I provide a comprehensive review of current research to establish a gap in knowledge on the perspectives of teachers who have remained in the classroom. This

review of the literature on teacher retention provides a more in-depth explanation of the need for the current study. The literature review includes a collection of shared ideas identified and grouped as follows: teacher attrition and retention, teacher resilience, teacher motivation, teachers' perspectives, gaps in the literature, and the impact on stakeholders.

In this research, I identified and examined rural teachers' perspectives regarding why they persist and the factors that affect their decisions to remain in the classroom. The literature review encompasses topics relevant to this study including (a) improving teacher retention, (b) administrative awareness of the importance of teacher perspectives regarding teacher retention, and (c) an increase in teacher resilience. Results of this study may promote better awareness of the importance of teachers who persist in the classroom and their lived experiences.

Teacher Attrition

As a result of teacher attrition, U.S. schools face hardships with a considerable and constant number of qualified teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years (Allen & Sims, 2018; Calvert & Perryman, 2020). Teacher attrition is on average more challenging in southern U.S. states (Gause et al., 2020). One state in the Southeast saw a 16% increase in teacher vacancies in the 2017–2018 school year (Gause et al., 2020). Many researchers have studied increases in teacher attrition (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2017). Researchers noted that school leaders from various countries viewed the most significant obstacle for increasing the quality of instruction as a scarcity of suitably qualified staff (Allen & Sims, 2018). The elevated percentage of teacher attrition has been described in

countries other than the United States (Trent, 2019). In the United States, the average

teaching career has declined to 11 years (Bursey et al., 2018). In addition to the United

States, Norway, England, and Belgium have reported premature teacher attrition (Avalos

& Valenzuela, 2016).

Teacher attrition can lead to staff volatility that adversely influences the

community atmosphere and the total structural operations (Bursey et al., 2018; Dinning et

al., 2018). As an added cost for school districts, teacher attrition expenses involve

replacement cost and employing incentives, professional development, instruction cost

for new staff orientation, and efficiency cost (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Replacing a

teacher in the United States, on average, costs between $4,400 and $17, 900 with

individual states spending over 1 billion dollars (Bowles et al., 2019). Retaining quality

teachers has become a national challenge with 50% of teachers exiting the profession

before retirement and 8% leaving yearly (Abitabile, 2020; Glazer, 2018). With a

projected increase of 3 million students within the next 10 years and a 35% decrease in

teacher enrollment programs, a large number of school systems in the United States battle

to replenish their classrooms with certified teachers (Abitabile, 2020).

Factors contributing to the high rate of teacher attrition include high pressure,

high expectations, stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction due to challenging work conditions

(Camacho & Parham, 2019). Teaching conditions play a significant role in teachers'

choices to move schools or exit the profession (Carver-Thomas et al., 2016). Schools

with high-minority and high-poverty students tend to see higher rates of teacher attrition

(Carver-Thomas et al., 2016). Teachers face increasing demands to be successful in

meeting students' needs both academically and socially/emotionally (Camacho & Parham, 2019). Teacher attrition is an educational dilemma that has created a need to retain qualified teachers and stop them from exiting the classroom (Harmsen et al., 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017). A study of the experiences of former teachers in Utah, a state with the highest teacher attrition rates in the United States, provided some of the reasons why teachers leave the profession, including workload, stress, shortage of resources, emotions, pressure to perform, relationships among colleagues, overflowing classrooms, and lack of trust as a professional (Allsop & Newberry, 2017). Teacher attrition creates a challenging learning environment for students and negatively impacts student achievement (Allsop & Newberry, 2017). Researchers noted high rates of teacher attrition adversely affect student success results due to differences in teaching and teacher worth and efficiency among teachers who resign and the teachers who replace them (Bowles et al., 2019).

Teacher Retention

There is a growing concern about the status of teaching and the retention of quality teachers in a setting of global education reform and intense technological and social change (Alexander et al., 2020). Little thought has been given to teacher retention (Alexander et al., 2020). The attentiveness of teacher retention efforts has centered on new teachers; however, evidence of progressively experienced teachers exiting the field is a cause for concern (Smith & Trans, 2020). Researchers noted the decrease in teacher experience is not attributable to a shortage of applicants but rather to the increasing retention crisis (Lehman, 2017). Poor teacher retention negatively impacts student success and reduces teacher effectiveness (Garcia et al., 2019). Poor teacher retention is a

central concern for district leaders, schools, administrators, politicians, and teachers because of the negative impact it can have on culture, student achievement, and school climate (Franks, 2019). Teacher retention should be of significant importance to the U.S. agenda (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teacher retention has become a national and worldwide challenge with the United States reporting an 8% turnover of teaching personnel each year (Blandford et al., 2018). Poor teacher retention hurts both the cohesion of the school as a whole, and the morale of those teachers who stay, which is reasonable given the central role teachers play in decisions concerning instruction, curriculum, student assessment, and school policy and governance (Garcia et al., 2019). Poor teacher retention imposes financial, organizational, and instructional costs that jeopardize the educational setting (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). A relationship exists between low teacher retention, low student performance, and unsatisfactory teaching, especially in underprivileged areas (Dannels & Rudick, 2020).

Schools with poor retention rates can see positive results by turning some of their attention to retaining the school's highly qualified teachers. Preserving qualified teachers is a significant element in education quality (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016). Quality teachers are individuals who can, regardless of the stage in their career, successfully maintain their obligation to teach in the face of intrinsic difficulties and change (McKinlay et al., 2017). In various educational and cultural contexts, teaching has been rated as one of the most stressful professions (Pakarinen & Saloviita, 2021). Effectively retaining teachers is pertinent to school and student success; therefore, administrators,

policymakers, and district leaders must acknowledge influential factors that can increase teacher retention.

Elements that impact teacher retention and may be vital to teacher longevity, including encouragement and gratitude, an environment where proficient teaching can thrive and develop, and surroundings that promote shared learning possibilities (Gibson et al., 2019). School leaders play an influential role as advocates of teachers' professional growth, progression, and retention (Gibson et al., 2019). Positive teacher results involving added motivation, work approval, and proficiency have a greater chance to transpire when school leaders demonstrate respect and concern for teacher opinions and individual needs (Kouali, 2017). Researchers noted that principal behavior impacts teacher job satisfaction (Kouali, 2017). A teacher's job satisfaction relates to their feelings regarding their teaching role (Kouali, 2017). Teacher work contentment and how it affects the school environment influence the preservation of teachers (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). A teacher's satisfaction with their school is a significant contributing factor to their decision to leave or stay (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). A teacher's self-efficacy or noted beliefs in their abilities to efficiently manage the duties, responsibilities, and difficulties associated with their profession plays a vital role in influencing central academic outcomes and contentment in the work setting (Barni et al., 2019). Teachers with increased self-efficacy levels encounter fewer problems with student behavior, decreases in career-related stress, and increased levels of job satisfaction (Barni et al., 2019). Improved teacher self-efficacy, can result in improved student achievement, teacher job satisfaction and well-being (Barni et al., 2019; Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

Retention in Rural Schools

Teacher retention is a major concern in rural communities throughout the United States (DeNisco, 2019). The teacher attrition dilemma increases in rural, high-poverty schools that have difficulty recruiting and maintaining staff (Balgopal et al., 2019). Staffing challenges in rural schools is an international phenomenon (Handal et al., 2018). Rural schools frequently struggle with major staffing problems, with some districts reporting candidate pools as few to non-existent (DeNisco, 2019; Gause et al., 2020). Decreases in enrollments in some states have commanded rural schools to integrate or close (DeNisco, 2019). Teachers in rural areas face cultural barriers, social isolation, limited resources, and a lack of training for multi-age classrooms (Weldon, 2018). Researchers noted that rural teachers are more likely to leave as the percentage of students served by Special Education and those identified as at-risk increase (Badgett et al., 2019).

Retention dilemmas are profound when considering teachers grow significantly during the first five years in the profession (Ash et al., 2017). In rural schools, 15 to 20 % of teachers leave yearly (Sawchuk, 2018). A gap in practice exists on teachers who remain in the classroom in rural schools. This study seeks to address this gap and provide a rationale for teachers who persist.

Administration

Administration plays a significant role in teacher retention and fostering resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). A school's leadership's caliber is a significant predictor of teachers returning yearly (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). Administrative support is vital for

teacher resilience and a teacher's ability to tolerate the stressors they face in the profession (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). Schools with supportive leaders have fewer student behavior problems, and teacher involvement in decision-making results in fewer attrition cases and movement (Gibson et al., 2019). Researchers note a positive correlation between effective leaders and teacher retention (Kraft et al., 2016; Martinez, 2019). Highly developed administrative skills are traits that leaders need to guarantee that teacher-principal relationships are cultivated (Martinez, 2019).

Effective principals who nurture supportive cultures, encourage teachers, and recognize teacher efforts are more likely to retain quality teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). Bonato (2019), notes that teachers who leave the profession would be more apt to stay or return to teaching, emphasizing support for teachers and students. According to Rumschlag (2017), there is a connection between a teacher's ability to voice decisions and whether they stay or leave the profession. Researchers note that 84% of teachers desire a voice in decisions that impact them (Bowles et al., 2019). Teachers' abilities to participate in decisions that impact the school are important predictions for commitment and higher teacher retention (Torres, 2018). When teachers are allowed to make decisions concerning planning, professional development practices, school-wide guidelines and procedures, and management of classroom materials, there is a degree of contentment, echoed in teacher retention (Bradford & Kamrath, 2020).

The four administrative support areas that teachers hold in high regard are emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical support (Bowles, et al., 2019). The most meaningful type of administrative support among teachers is emotional support,

which consists of trust and reasonable teacher expectations (Bowles, et al., 2019). An

empathic principal relates positively to crucial teacher work outcomes, including stronger

emotional stamina, job approval, and school commitment (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). The

second most significant type of support is addressing environmental, safety issues, and

student behavior (Bowles et al., 2019). The third most noteworthy in administrative

support is instructional, meaning teachers have a say in decisions, quality professional

learning, and ample resources (Bowles et al., 2019; Torres, 2018). A teacher's decision to

leave or stay at their school or in the profession has a direct association with school

climate and the principal's self-efficacy (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). A teacher's perspective

on a principal's self-efficacy is the most influential component when determining to stay

at a school (Dahlkamp et al., 2017).

Teacher Resilience

Resilience is the dynamic process within which a person can adaptively overcome

challenging events (Jones et al., 2017). Impactful to teacher retention, resiliency affects

social strength both externally and internally within a school (Soulen & Wine, 2018).

Researchers note a resilient person is less apt to leave their profession and more likely to

persist in challenging situations (Mansfield et al., 2012a). Teacher resilience is emerging

as a significant area of research (Ha et al., 2016). Research on teacher resilience can

provide the why and how teachers flourish and persevere in the day to day difficulties

and stressors related to classroom teaching (Luet et al., 2020). The experiences and

perspectives of teachers who can face challenging situations and difficult school

environments while persisting in the classroom are needed as school systems continue to

struggle with maintaining and attracting quality teachers who are motivated, committed, and engaged. Regardless of the type of school, urban, rural, or low-income, teaching is inherently a demanding and emotional profession where teachers deal with an endless number of stressors (Aguilar, 2018). The most resilient teachers use strategies to react to stressful moments including reducing the intensity of the occurrence and interpreting and dealing with the stress's underlying cause (Aguilar, 2018).

Resilient teachers generate methods for coping with conflict, stress, difficulties, and pressure that enable them to adjust to the challenges that come with teaching. Researchers suggest that teacher resilience is a construct that can be cultivated and formed (Graber et al., 2016). Fostering resilience requires an awareness of emotions coupled with responding constructively when intense feelings and difficult situations arise (Brown et al., 2018). Efficacy and distress tolerance are vital components of the resilience construct (Brown et al., 2018). Knowing how to sustain and cultivate resilience for teachers is imperative in education where attrition can result in either the loss of veteran teachers from the classroom or the loss of experienced teachers from the profession (Day & Gu, 2013b; Soulen & Wine, 2018).

Teacher resilience is vital to understanding how teachers who persist in the classroom deal with adversities while others surrender to the difficulties of the profession (Graber et al., 2016). According to Gu (2014); and Soulen and Wine (2018), resiliency allows teachers to sustain a sense of commitment and moral purpose to assist in student learning and achievement in their everyday teaching. Teacher resilience leads to a stronger responsibility to students, value-driven decision-making, professional and

personal fulfillment (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Teacher resilience is instrumental in

teacher retention and teacher satisfaction and is linked to effective student results

(Beltman et al., 2016). Resiliency promotes compassion flexibility, and the ability to

rebound from hardships (Harris, 2019). A teacher who displays compassion cultivates

resilience evident in both the reaction and result of circumstances involving unhappiness

(Harris, 2019).

Resilient teachers adjust to changes in the work setting through the flexibility of

belief and action. Resilient teachers can acknowledge the truth and find purpose in

adversity (Djourova et al., 2019). Resilient educators are more likely to become quality

teachers who inspire and engage students from diverse backgrounds (Balgopal et al.,

2019). Resilient individuals can sensibly evaluate circumstances without emphasizing the

negative aspects, adjusting, and taking action (Djourova et al., 2019). Resilient teachers

adapt to stressful and adverse situations by employing environmental and individual

resources (Arnup & Bowles, 2016). A resilient teacher focuses on identifying individual

strengths while considering the type of environmental context and the seriousness of the

difficulty (Day, 2014). Environmental promoters of resilience amongst teachers include

administrator support, preservice teaching program support, student support, and friends,

family, and colleague support (Beltman et al., 2018; Curran et al., 2019).

The ability to develop resilience for teachers comes both as they learn to foster a

sense of purpose, develop problem solving skills, and feel socially competent. The

development of these qualities is contingent on individual circumstances impacted by the

environment (Day & Gu, 2014c). Through a four-year study on variations in the lives and

work of teachers, the experiences of resilience among teachers are closely connected to their everyday ability to maintain their educational purposes and effectively manage the inevitable uncertainties which are natural in the teaching profession (Day and Gu, 2013b).

A significant factor in teacher resilience is the capacity to be resilient (Day & Gu, 2014c). A result of positive teacher adaptation is professional growth, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness (Clara, 2017). Resilience allows teachers to bounce back from frustration, adversity, and misfortune and is essential for an effective teacher (Blundo et al., 2017). Further positive teacher adaptation includes low levels of burnout, high levels of security, and job satisfaction (Mansfield et al., 2016b). Teacher resilience is a mixture of established skills, character traits, and developmental processes (Day & Gu, 2007a). When analyzing resilience levels, evidence of positive adaptation should be present despite the severity of the situation (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Individuals who demonstrate a candidness to change, an eagerness to adapt, and emotional constancy are resilient (Balgopal et al., 2019). Teachers who display resilience positively adapt to the challenging situations that arise in their classrooms.

Teacher Motivation

Teaching is considered a gratifying and rewarding job, yet it is also known for being one of the most challenging careers in the 21st century (Smalley & Smith, 2018). Teachers face numerous obstacles throughout their careers and remain motivated and loyal to the teaching profession because of a desire to positively impact students, give back to the community, mold future generations, and advance social injustices (Haug et

al., 2020). Educators must be aware of teachers' adaptable motivations like intrinsic and social service morals for teaching (Gladstone et al., 2021). To maintain their motivation, teachers need a better understanding of the components that facilitate successful teachers. Teacher motivation is at the center of studies concerned with teacher resilience and effectiveness (Carter et al., 2019).

Motivated teachers think critically, reflect on their teaching, and work toward methods to advance their practices (Daniels, 2017). Motivation guides, sustains, and initiates, all individual behavior (Sale, 2020). A significant facet of teacher effectiveness and student success, teacher motivations have repercussions for teacher effectiveness (Gladstone et al., 2021; Lombardi et al., 2018). According to Bess (2016), the main element contributing to successful classroom practices is strong motivation. A significant factor in teacher motivation, performance, and retention is job satisfaction (Gimbert & Kapa, 2018; Kafumbu, 2019).

Job satisfaction is the level of security, contentment, and gratification, a person acquires from daily work or a professional choice (Gimbert & Kapa, 2018). A way to decrease teacher attrition is by improving and understanding a teachers' job satisfaction (Arnup & Bowles, 2016). Attributes associated with teacher satisfaction include commitment, apathy, teaching motivations, self-efficacy, and resilience (Admiraal et al., 2019). A study on teachers in the United States examined overall job satisfaction (Ford et al., 2018). The research revealed that overall school climate and effective principal leadership are significant in teacher job satisfaction (Ford et al., 2018; Torres, 2018). Teachers' perspectives on whether their opinions and voices are considered within a

school are related to their job satisfaction (Webb, 2018). A study in Italy involving 2,000 teachers revealed the influence of teacher self-efficacy regarding the connection between student achievement and job satisfaction (Admiraal et al., 2019). The researchers noted that teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic desires played a significant role in teacher motivation, along with job satisfaction.

Two motivational factors that influence individuals to enter the teaching profession are extrinsic and intrinsic needs. Teachers begin with external needs and move to more internal needs in Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation. Intrinsic motivations are considered highly significant in describing teachers who persist and their accounts of the profession (Chiong et al., 2017). Teaching is mostly driven by intrinsic motivation, the inward desire to educate others, make a social contribution, and impart knowledge (Etherington & Stezycka, 2020). Yet, government accountability actions are adversely impacting teachers' autonomy (Dannels & Rudick, 2020). Dissatisfaction among teachers happens because teachers are not able to access the moral benefits of teaching such as feeling they are completing work that is in the greatest interest of their communities and students (Dannels & Rudick, 2020).

Specific intrinsic rewards relevant to teacher motivation include the educational process as it relates to student progress and subject matter, which relates to working in a respected field as well as developing professionally by expanding skills and knowledge (Etherington & Stezycka, 2020). Teachers see the profession as high stress with low benefits, yet many feel intrinsic motives were adequate reasons for pursuing the profession (Chiong et al., 2017). Many individuals enter the teaching profession because

of extrinsic reasons like summers off. Extrinsic motivation involves an individual's propensity to participate in activities that result in external rewards such as praise, notoriety, and money (Cherry & Gans, 2019). The external rewards associated with extrinsic motivation can be a valuable and efficient tool for getting teachers to stay motivated (Cherry & Gans, 2019). Extrinsic rewards, such as positive teacher feedback, can raise intrinsic motivation (Cherry & Gans, 2019).

Teachers' Perspectives

The teaching profession is among the most physically and emotionally demanding careers. International and national reports of increased teacher attrition are linked to workplace stress (Bower et al., 2020). Researchers noted a strong association between stress, teachers' decisions to exit the profession, and factors like low motivation, resilience, self-efficacy, poor student outcomes, and job dissatisfaction (Bower et al., 2020). Teachers who have overcome the demands and stresses that are present in education while maintaining their well-being and determination may provide a deeper understanding of the teaching profession. Teachers with proven student achievement and development in instruction need to be considered an irreplaceable asset valued and supported so schools can create and sustain success (Darling-Hammond, 2010). According to Gu (2014), it is more profitable and educationally more meaningful to place a greater emphasis on the factors that help teachers who decide to stay and remain committed to the learning of students. Teachers who persist have common dispositions like resilience (Beck et al., 2020).

Through this study, a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on how they have remained in the classroom despite obstacles may benefit policymakers, teachers, administrators, and district leaders in recognizing ways to positively impact teacher retention. Through virtual one-on-one interviews, teachers were presented with questions that centered on comprehending their perspectives of how they have remained in the classroom. The phenomenon of teachers' perspectives on remaining in the classroom, the practices, and adaptations can provide valuable insight for school and district leaders. Teachers leaving the profession is well noted in studies and continues to be a barrier in education (Ashby & Rood, 2020). Much of the research focuses on novice teachers or teachers who have left the profession altogether (Newburgh, 2019).

Research on why teachers exit the profession is needed, studies that share teacher perspectives on what motivates them to remain in the classroom may have socially profitable outcomes for teachers, students, and administrators. Teachers who persist in the classroom have a deep understanding of students that permits them to successfully decipher and identify procedures relevant to the classroom complexity (Bogert et al., 2016). Teachers display the capacity for satisfaction and progress in pursuit of professionally and personally meaningful aspirations (Gu, 2014) and their perspectives are rarely considered, creating a need to listen and trust them. Teachers who persist in the classroom can provide understanding, inspiration, wisdom, and approach.

Teacher Voices

Teachers who are more apt to agree with assertions implying disappointment with their career feel voiceless in school-level decisions (Rentner, 2016). According to the

literature on teachers' voices, school leaders and policymakers reiterate the importance of teacher attitudes and understanding as to the most significant connection we have to comprehend and explain school (Rentner et al., 2016). It is essential that teachers collectively use their voices to advocate for effective practices (Berry & Shields, 2017). Teachers lived experiences of professional growth are vital to inferring and comprehending their individual and shared practices (Taylor, 2017). Teachers feel their voices are rarely considered in the decision-making processes at the national (94%), state (94%), or district (76%) levels (Rentner et al., 2016; Webb, 2018).

When teachers who persist in the classroom are empowered and able to have a voice, the results can include a decline in attrition rates (Durham et al., 2018). A school district in Florida implemented a new program that gave teachers a voice in leadership opportunities, culture, school climate, and professional development (Durham et al., 2018). As a result, the school saw a reduction in teacher attrition rates of sixty percent to less than ten percent (Durham et al., 2018).

Gaps in Practice

An in-depth assessment and review of the literature revealed a gap in practice centered on teachers' perspectives of remaining in the classroom. Research shows a range of possibilities for the teacher attrition phenomenon (Allsop & Newberry, 2017). Limited literature focuses on the perspectives of teachers who have remained in the classroom; hence, a need for further research on teachers who have remained in the classroom. Accounts shared by teachers who leave or remain in the classroom can understand how teachers' perspectives change throughout their career and what they see and how they see

(Glazer, 2020b). It is vital to seek teachers' perceptions before they exit the profession (Chiong et al., 2017).

A significant piece of the teacher retention problem missing from the literature is teacher personality variables and commitment (Jones, 2016). An added approach to teacher retention is to focus on teachers who have remained in the classroom, the components that sustain them, how they navigate during stressful situations, and thus how they cultivate resilience and prosper instead of merely survive in their work setting (Mansfield et al., 2016b). There is adequate cause for comprehensive research on why experienced teachers remain in teaching (Chiong et al., 2017). Teacher stories can provide school leaders with ideas for retaining experienced teachers (Glazer, 2020b).

Student Achievement

Teachers are the main contributing factor to student success (Abitabile, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2010). They are one of the greatest influences impacting student achievement (Hamlin & Mobra, 2020). Students of an effective teacher may reach beyond a full year of learning when correlated to students taught by an ineffective teacher (Hamlin & Mobra, 2020). Sizable teacher turnover can decrease student achievement (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2017). Districts and schools failing to retain successful teachers encounter a greater expense with lost student learning (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2017). Teachers who elect to stay in the classroom positively affect student achievement and teacher retention by encouraging individual and professional growth to build aptitude (Majocha et al., 2019). Schools with poor teacher retention rates see reductions in teacher quality that result in unfavorable outcomes for students (Ladd & Sorensen, 2020).

Teacher turnover can cause instability, adversely impacting student achievement, and

producing administrative challenges at the school level (Glazer, 2018a). Many studies

have shown the negative impacts of poor teacher retention on student achievement

(Henry & Redding, 2018; Ladd & Sorensen, 2020). Students who attend low-achieving

schools are negatively affected by the loss of qualified teachers (Hanushek et al., 2016).

Poor teacher retention in schools can negatively affect student success by disrupting the

educational profession and adversely influencing the school budget due to the amount of

money spent recruiting and preparing teacher replacements (Dahlkamp et al., 2017).

Professional Development

Professional development refers not only to an educators' persistent growth in

skills and knowledge, but of more significance, growth in self-understanding, efficacy,

moral commitment, and resilience (Brunetti & Marston, 2018). Limited research has been

directed at the professional development of teachers who remain in the classroom

(Brunetti & Marston, 2018). Significant and valuable professional development is vital

for creating a positive school climate that promotes teacher success. According to Bonato

(2019), new teachers leave the profession due to a lack of support and isolation. A

professional learning community provides support for teachers. A multifaceted

continuance of teacher development nurtured through persistent professional commitment

and collaboration can lead to increased teacher resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Teacher-led professional development can provide teachers with assistance, resources,

and openness to where teachers' dissatisfaction lies (Balgopal et al., 2019). According to

Smalley and Smith (2018), professional development was necessary to retain teachers

and maintain a promising career path. A lack of peer collaboration and professional training can lead to lower job satisfaction (Bursey, et al., 2018). To ensure that teachers remain, school leaders must focus on all stakeholders' inclusiveness by sustaining and producing a collective school culture (Abitabile, 2020). Whether a teacher stays or leaves the profession is closely associated with professional development opportunities and their ability to make collaborative decisions, both of which increase teacher retention and teacher efficacy (Posey, 2017). Researchers noted, teachers who were unable to fulfill their professional development left their teaching positions or changed schools (Webb, 2018).

Professional development and administrative support have proven to be the most essential to teachers when deciding to leave or stay (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Professional communities were a valuable incentive that sustained teachers (Day & Gu, 2007a). Teacher involvement in professional development has a significant positive association with teacher job satisfaction (Johansson et al., 2020). According to Jones (2016), teachers who persist in the classroom may have lessons to share about remaining in the teaching profession.

Impact on Stakeholders

Teacher perspectives on remaining in the classroom may provide stakeholders with a valuable understanding of why they persist. Retaining and recruiting teachers remains a persistent challenge for schools across the United States (Hamlin & Mobra, 2020). Poor teacher retention impacts include costly burdens on school systems, lower teacher morale, and decreases in student achievement. Rural, low performing schools are

likely to depend on unseasoned teachers, lateral movement, and teachers with provisional

certificates (Ladd & Sorensen, 2020). Poor teacher retention can undermine achievement

and financially impact school districts (Saatcioglu, 2020). Teachers who leave in the

middle of the year negatively impact learning when students face a temporary teacher,

altered instructional approaches, and disruption in teacher and student collaboration

(Henry & Redding, 2018). Teachers play a significant role in student achievement.

Teacher turnover leaves long-term adverse effects on the teaching staff's quality and

student achievement (Ladd & Sorensen, 2020).

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I provided literature and evidence that determined there is a need for

teachers' perspectives on remaining in a rural classroom in the Southeast. Research

findings indicate that examining teachers' perspectives is an endless and accepted

obligation for studies in education (Petrinko, 2019). Teachers who are both resilient and

motivated, persist in the profession despite the barriers and challenges that force many

teachers to leave. Many teachers stay confident, motivated, and determined, whereas

other teachers were consumed with difficult problems or become disenchanted

(Mommers et al., 2018).

In this section, the literature review is divided into central categories. A greater

understanding developed of teachers' experiences and factors that contributed to their

leaving the classroom. Further review of the literature revealed supportive administration

was vital in retaining new teachers and a central factor to successful teacher retention

(Booker et al., 2019; Gibson et al., 2019). The teaching profession is stressful and

challenging, both at the beginning and in the later phases of a teacher's career (Mommers et al., 2018). Teachers who remain in the profession after 10 years and have developed ways to handle the stress and difficulties of teaching, may provide insight into how to persist in the classroom.

In Chapter 3, I discuss in greater depth the rationale used for this study. I provide the research design, the research questions, and the methodology used for this study. I explain the vital role a researcher plays in a study. The sections under the methodology include participant selection, details on the instrumentation, one-on-one virtual or phone interviews, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. In Chapter 3, I discuss trustworthiness and recognize the importance of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in my study. I include ethical procedures that ensure the protection of my participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives of remaining in a rural school in the Southeast United States. A gap in practice exists on teacher retention in rural schools where teachers persist. While reviewing the literature on teacher retention, I observed that literature on teachers who exit the profession overshadowed literature on teachers who persist. I conducted a basic qualitative study to understand how rural teachers persist in the classroom. Teacher attrition rates are greater in the South (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The perspectives of teachers who persist in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States may provide valuable insight into the recent increase in teacher turnover percentages in the South.

In Chapter 3, I provide the rationale for the basic qualitative approach of one-to-one interviews for this study. Included are the participant selection criteria, my role as the researcher, and the procedures used to collect and analyze data. Using purposeful sampling, I recruited rural elementary teachers who had 10 or more years of teaching experience. Axial and open coding were used to analyze the collected data. Using thematic analysis, I identified, analyzed, and interpreted patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Qualitative interviews provided a deeper understanding of the perspectives of teachers who remain in rural schools in the Southeast United States.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research question guided my study: What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States? According to Carl and Ravitch (2016), qualitative research addresses meaning of the

participants' experiences. I chose a basic qualitative design to understand how individuals

understand and make meaning of their world (see Grenier & Merriam, 2019). A basic

qualitative design was appropriate for this study because I focused on the perspectives

and experiences of teachers who have remained in the classroom. Using a basic

qualitative approach, I gained a deeper understanding of how educators interpret the

central phenomenon. A small participant pool of 12 rural elementary teachers facilitated a

deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. Rather than relying on numbers, I

relied on participants' perspectives, yielding richly descriptive results (see Grenier &

Merriam, 2019).

     I used a basic qualitative approach with individual interviews to collect and

analyze data. Interviews were used to collect data and identify emerging patterns or

themes that provided an understanding of teachers' perspectives on remaining in the

classroom. Interviews allow participants to share how they see and experience the world

(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Conducting interviews allowed for questions to be created

ahead of time and gave participants the opportunity to express their opinions, activities,

and practices.

     A quantitative approach was considered but rejected due to the sampling approach

needed to recruit participants. For this study, the qualitative approach of purposive

sampling was needed to select participants who could inform the phenomenon of interest

(see Carl & Ravitch, 2021). An ethnographic design was considered but rejected due to

the amount of in-field time needed within the school. A qualitative approach of virtual

individual interviews was appropriate for this study due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trustworthiness for this qualitative study included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). A systematic approach of thematic analysis was used to identify, organize, and gain insight into themes in the data set (see Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis places importance on coding reliability, flexibility, and theme development (Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017). Research on teacher retention with an emphasis on teachers who remain provided a deeper understanding of how teachers persist. Literature on teacher retention was overshadowed by attrition concerns with little emphasis on the reasons why teachers stay (see Chiong et al., 2017). The focus of the current study was teacher retention among a specific teacher population to understand their individual experiences of persisting in the classroom.

Role of the Researcher

The key source for building a conceptual framework is the researcher (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). As the researcher of this basic qualitative study, I served as the primary instrument during the qualitative data collection. As the primary instrument in the data collection, I developed an intimate relationship with the participants, setting, and data analysis (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Creswell, 2014). My role as the researcher was to remain focused and unbiased throughout the qualitative data collection process. Sampling bias could have negatively impacted the quality of the study results, including the methods for informed consent, procedures for recruiting, methods for ensuring participant confidentiality, procedures for recording, and interview settings (see Adkins et al., 2020). I used reflexivity to examine any assumptions or beliefs that could have impacted

research decisions. A reflective journal was used to capture and develop continuing ideas

and discoveries, struggles related to the fieldwork and design, and analytic sensemaking

(Carl & Ravitch, 2021). Research reflexivity is vital to the trustworthiness and credibility

of the data collection and analysis within a study (Adkins et al., 2020). During the

research process, measures were taken to protect the confidentiality of each participant

and safeguard them from harm linked to issues of dignity and respect (see Adkins et al.,

2020). The one-to-one interviews included open-ended questions allowing me to clarify

participants' responses, promoting confirmability and credibility (see Adkins et al.,

2020). All policies and guidelines regarding research set forth by Walden University

were followed. Before the data collection process, approval was obtained through

Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (#03-02-21-0539063).

I used purposeful sampling to recruit 12 rural elementary teachers who had

remained in the classroom for 10 or more years. Using snowball sampling, I recruited

other interested participants through current participants. I was respectful and

professional to all eligible participants. Potential participants who met the requirement of

10 or more years in the classroom received an email containing the participation

invitation and consent form. Before the interviews took place, participants received a

copy of the interview questions (see Appendix A). I assured participants that their

identity and responses would remain confidential, thereby allowing them to feel secure

and confident when answering each question. I remained aware of cultural assumptions

and made a conscious effort to examine and comprehend the perspectives of the

participants for this study. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss questions

they had about the study. To provide flexibility for participants, I provided a list of times for interviews. All virtual interviews were recorded and transcribed word for word. Using open and axial coding, I identified commonalities within the data to distinguish emerging themes. Data collected during the interview process were kept in a secure locked filing cabinet, and digital files were stored on a computer with passcodes.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The focus of this basic qualitative study was a population of rural elementary teachers. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 12 rural elementary teachers with 10 or more years of classroom experience to participate in this study. Teacher participants had varying numbers of years in the classroom and degree levels. The initial sample size was selected based on its logical relevance to the research problem (see Grenier & Merriam, 2019). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, collecting data within the rural school was impossible. Snowball sampling is useful when participants are difficult to identify (Ruane, 2016). Snowball sampling occurs through referrals and social networks (Ruane, 2016). The purpose of qualitative research is to intentionally choose participants who can best provide an understanding of the experience to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

The initial sample for this study originated with one contact. After making contact and winning the trust of a few participants, names of other potential participants were provided (see Ruane, 2016). I intentionally selected 12 rural elementary teachers with 10 or more years of experience in the classroom. Recruiting and interviewing 12 expert

teachers provided an adequate sample size for achieving data saturation. Given that some rural elementary schools in the Southeast United States have fewer than 50 full-time teachers on staff, a sample size of 12 was sufficient for this study. A concern was the number of participants available who would meet the criteria for answering the research question.

Using the online platform Zoom and phone interviews provided participants with the opportunity to give comprehensive responses regarding their experiences of remaining in the classroom. Each participant received a participation invitation and consent form to ensure ethical standards were met and clear expectancies set by Walden University's IRB were maintained (Walden University, 2019). A consent form is a common approach (Burkholder et al., 2016) for notifying interested participants about their possible involvement in a study and validating their intended willingness to participate. Participants received an emailed copy of the interview questions and demographic questionnaire. This gave participants time to process and collect their thoughts before the interview.

Instrumentation

For this basic qualitative study, one-to-one semi structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect comprehensive data on teachers' perspectives of remaining in the classroom. The interview questions were based on Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation and Gu and Day's (2014) resilience theory. Maslow's theory of motivation guided my research questions concerning teacher motivation. Gu and Day's resilience theory supported everyday teacher effectiveness and commitment in

responding positively to the inevitable uncertainties that are common in their profession. The combination of theories contributed to the interview questions focusing on motivation and resilience. The use of both theories supported the research question that addressed a better understanding of teacher motivation and resilience. The interview questions were precise with tailored follow-up questions. Open-ended questions reduced the likelihood of out-of-context conversations. The reading and order of the interview questions were the same for each participant. To help each participant feel relaxed, I remained alert and aware of my tone of voice and vocal expressions during each interview. The audio recordings of each interview were transcribed word for word. By conducting qualitative interviews, I obtained in-depth information about the understandings and experiences of teachers' perspectives on remaining in the classroom.

The content validity was accomplished during the many stages of instrument development (see Creswell, 2014). The purpose of the instrument was identified, including the relativeness and alignment to the conceptual framework. The instrument was created based on theory and the research question.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Snowball sampling was used to identify and invite 12 rural elementary teachers with 10 or more years in the classroom. The initial sample began with one participant and led to additional participants until an adequate sample size was achieved. Before the recruitment and interview process began, approval was obtained through Walden University's (IRB) (#03-02-21-0539063). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, information for participation was emailed to each prospective participant. Teachers who were

interested in participating received a participation invitation and consent form that provided a brief overview of the study. Teachers who chose to participate received a copy of the interview questions before the interview to give them time to process the questions. Along with the participation invitation and consent form, participants received a short demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Data Collection Plan

One-to-one interviews by phone or Zoom and a reflective journal were used to ensure that the data collected were current and rich in detail. Each participant received a demographics form to fill out before the interview. All interview questions were in the same order and read the same way for each participant. The comprehensive open-ended interview questions allowed participants to elaborate on their views and experiences of remaining in the classroom. Each interview lasted between 50 and 60 minutes. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were discouraged. I completed both phone and Zoom interviews in my home office, ensuring a quiet secure location. No one entered or exited the room while interviews were taking place. Ensuring a quiet and secure environment helped participants feel at ease with the virtual format. An audit trail, reflective journal, and peer debriefer were used to control and eliminate any personal bias that might exist (see McGregor, 2018). Participants were greeted with kind words and positive gestures. Only the audio of each phone and Zoom interview were recorded and transcribed word for word. After each interview, I thanked each participant for participating and their contribution to the study. I emailed participants a one-page summary of the study findings and asked them to review and respond with any changes.

Using member checking increased the validity of the research results and allowed participants to review the summary of the study findings for accurate representation (see Thomas, 2017).

Data Analysis Plan

Elements of Maslow's theory of motivation and the resilience theory provided a framework for recognizing and creating themes within the data. To make sense of the data, thematic analysis was used as the structured method for searching through the data set to determine logical themes (see Carl & Ravitch, 2016). Thematic analysis is an intentional selection that is part of a study's design, including goals, primary questions, literature review, and the conceptual framework (Saldana, 2016). Using thematic analysis, I identified categories and themes, to answer the research question. Open and axial coding were used to collect and analyze data. The data from this study provided new understanding of how rural teachers persist in districts with poor teacher retention.

Thematic analysis is a six-phase analytic process (Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017). During phase one, I became familiar with the data by becoming deeply involved in the data set, being observant, being aware of repetition in the data, and asking questions (see Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017). Each interview was printed and organized based on the order of the interview. To ensure privacy, I used a code to represent each participant. I read and reread the transcripts being observant and aware of repetition in the data. I read the transcripts a third time and made notes as I read and created questions that developed from the reading.

In Phase 2, I created codes to gain a better understanding of the data. Open coding was used to identify and label all segments of significance and interest in the data set (see Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017). I used axial coding to connect data and identify categories (see Allen & Sims, 2018). Using axial coding, I identified 12 categories. Generating codes in Phase 2 of thematic analysis provided the foundation for analysis (see Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017).

During Phase 3, I constructed flexible themes through identification and pattern formation (see Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017). Braun and Clark's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis were used to identify patterns and themes. I used thematic data analysis to evaluate the data and arrange it into categories. The demographic information was used to cross-reference emerging themes to find any commonalities in participants' replies. Using member checking, each participant received a one-page summary of the analyzed data. Participants had no disputes with the summary and had no further comments to contribute.

Four patterns emerged from the data analysis a) inconsistency in leadership and staff positions, b) teacher's intrinsic motivation c) teacher strategies d) teacher relationships and support. A more extensive examination of patterns revealed the following themes: a) teachers described inconsistency among school staff, b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom c) teachers used various strategies that help them remain in the classroom d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support. In Phase 4, I reviewed emerging themes by checking to see if participant themes represented the meaning of the data segment (see Stainton-Rogers &

Willig, 2017). I evaluated the thematic data two more times. I created a visual map with the newly created themes. A peer debriefer who had a solid understanding of qualitative research, and the phenomena reviewed the thematic data. The peer debriefer assessed the thematic data for suitability of the emerging themes with the categorical data. I used Braun and Clarke (2012) key questions to help in further identifying potential themes.

Phase 5 consisted of defining and labeling themes and sharing the story of the data. The four themes that emerged in the data review included (a) teachers described inconsistency among school staff, (b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom, (c) teachers used various strategies to remain in the classroom, (d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support. During Phase 6, I created a report and checked all data, themes, and interpretations. There were no discrepancies in the data, so I concluded that no added analysis was needed. If there had been discrepancies, I would have explained the conflicts among the findings. The four themes were used to provide information on the research question regarding teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom.

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, a peer debriefer who has a solid understanding of qualitative research, and the phenomena reviewed the study. The peer debriefer was a knowledgeable and trustworthy collaborator who gave informative feedback that assisted in determining aspects of the study that needed revisions (see Given, 2008). Peer debriefing provided motivation to explore deeper into the data to gain a greater understanding of the participants' perspective (see Given, 2008). Using peer debriefing allowed for reflexivity of any bias present in this study (see Given, 2008).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To establish creditability, I remained transparent and intentional with my research procedures. According to Carl and Ravitch (2016a) being transparent aids in establishing validity and rigor that others can evaluate to determine the methods and conclusively comprehend how the findings originated. When using qualitative research, robust and validated methods of analysis increase the trustworthiness of the findings (Harper & McCunn, 2017). To increase the trustworthiness of this study, a reflective journal was used to document research findings and any bias that emerged. An audio recording of the selected teacher participants' interviews was transcribed word for word to ensure fidelity. After completing the data analysis, I used member checking and provided each participant with a one-page summary of the study findings. Data saturation was reached after enough data to replicate this study was provided and coding was no longer possible.

Transferability

Transferability is how qualitative research can be relevant, or transferable, to a wider context while sustaining the context richness (Carl & Ravitch, 2016a). Transferability was established using purposeful sampling and a thick description of teacher participants. Teachers who have remained in the classroom for 10 or more years possess a wide range of skill sets. Only rural teachers with current teaching certificates took part in this study. Teacher participants' credentials varied both in advanced degrees and teaching experience. A thick description of teacher participant perspectives along with the setting provided a true and detailed interpretation of the contextual factors.

Dependability

Dependability was achieved by maintaining rich documentation and consistency throughout the interviews and data collection process. Using one to one interviews ensured (see Carl and Ravitch, 2016a) rich, deep, personalized, and contextualized data along with person-centered, relational, partial, and subjective values. The interview instrument, established and directed the interviews and included precise, tailored follow up questions (see Carl & Ravitch, 2016a). Using open-ended questions that are exclusive to the topic reduced side conversations. The order and how questions were read were the same for each teacher participant. To ensure dependability, the findings and interpretations within the study remained consistent and supported by the data (see McGregor, 2018). To ensure impartiality and recognize bias throughout the study, I recorded my personal beliefs, motives, and theories (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Rich documentation was collected and maintained throughout the research process. A comprehensive audit trail was kept throughout the research process. The audit trail included (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018) sampling, facts on data management, reflective views, development of the findings, and research resources affirmed. By using the audit trail, I was able to reflect on the research path and examine the transparency within my study.

Confirmability

Confirmability includes exploring and acknowledging the ways that our prejudices and biases match our understanding of the data (Carl & Ravitch, 2016a). As the researcher, I was not looking for objectivity, but rather a confirmation for my

findings. To ensure confirmability, I remained neutral when analyzing data and understood ethics are vital to the research process (see McGregor, 2018). A reflective journal, audit trail, and peer debriefer were used to control and eliminate any personal bias that might exist (see McGregor, 2018). The reflective journal provided detailed predispositions, self-reflections, and practices conducted throughout the study (see McGregor, 2018). The audit trail helped to establish clear procedures for data analysis and data collection. By using an audit trail, I was able to reflect on the research path and assess the transparency within my study. A knowledgeable peer debriefer familiar with the phenomena provided both informative feedback, and motivation to explore deeper into the data to gain a better understanding of each participants perspective.

Ethical Procedures

Approval from Walden's (IRB) (#03-02-21-0539063) was gained so that I could use human subjects within my research. Using snowball sampling, one initial participant was asked to assist in identifying other potential participants that could support or add to the data. I emailed contributors the participation invitation/consent form that provided in-depth details about the study. To ensure participant comfort, interview questions were provided beforehand. I conducted the one-to-one interviews in my home office, ensuring a quiet and secure location. Participants were encouraged to find a quiet personal space away from other people to maintain confidentiality. Using pseudonyms secured the identity of all participants involved in the study. The locale of the study was kept confidential to ensure participant identity was not disclosed. Data collected from the study was not used for any reason outside of the research. All confidential documents on

the study including details, locale, and identities of individual participant information were kept in a secure locked filing cabinet and a computer with a protected passcode. As required by Walden University, all collected data will be protected for five years and then discarded.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided the rationale for this basic qualitative study on teachers' perspectives of remaining in a rural school in the Southeast United States. Included in this chapter, the research design along with the role of the researcher. The methodology includes participant selection, instrumentation used, procedures, data collection, and analysis. The data analysis plan describes in detail how data will be examined and interrupted along with an explanation of the four components of trustworthiness, creditable, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. I provided a comprehensive overview of the plan to ensure that all ethical procedures are followed, and the rights of the participants are not violated. Chapter 4 will be focused on data analysis concerning the research question.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives of remaining in a rural school in the Southeast United States. Snowball sampling was used to recruit one initial participant who assisted in identifying other potential participants. I sent each possible contributor a copy of the participation invitation and consent form to communicate information about the study. Possible contributors who wished to participate replied, "I consent." With each reply, I sent another email that included the interview questions (see Appendix A), the demographic survey (see Appendix B), and a list of times and days each participant could select from. Each participant was interviewed by phone or Zoom. The audio of each interview was recorded using the iPhone app Voice Memo. I transcribed each interview word for word with Microsoft Word so that patterns, codes, and themes could be developed. The focus of Chapter 4 is to communicate the analysis of data, including the details of the participant selection process, participants' demographics, and the methods for data collection and analysis. I used the following research question to guide my study: What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States?

Setting

The semi structured interviews for this study were conducted from my home through Zoom or by phone. Participants were selected from rural elementary schools in the Southeast United States with poor teacher retention. There were 12 teachers who agreed to take part in my study. All 12 participants had 10 or more years of experience and were teaching in rural Title I elementary schools with poor teacher retention.

No unexpected situations affected the analysis of the study results. Data were collected from 12 K-5 elementary teachers using one-to-one semi structured interviews conducted by Zoom or phone. Four interviews were conducted by Zoom and eight by phone. I transcribed each interview word for word and started the coding and analysis process.

Demographics

This study was conducted in the Southeast region of the United States. A total of 12 participants contributed to my study. All 12 participants are general education teachers with 10 or more years of teaching experience. Teaching experience ranged from 12 to 30 plus years. Each participant was given a code: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, and T12. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' code, gender, level of teaching experience, highest degree, and grade taught.

Table 1

Research Participants

Participant	Gender	Level of teaching experience	Highest degree	Grades taught
T1	F	10–20	Master's	K
T2	F	20–30	Postgraduate	1st
T3	F	20–30	Postgraduate	5th
T4	F	30+	Master's	4th
T5	F	10–20	Master's	1st
T6	F	20–30	Master's	5th
T7	F	10–20	Postgraduate	3rd
T8	F	20–30	Bachelor's	4th
T9	M	10–20	Bachelor's	5th
T10	F	20–30	Postgraduate	K
T11	M	10–20	Master's	2nd
T12	F	20–30	Postgraduate	K

Data Collection

Once I received approval from Walden University's (IRB) (#03-02-21-0539063), the data collection process was initiated. I used snowball sampling to recruit participants and assist in identifying other possible contributors. Before collecting data, I sent each participant a digital invitation to participate in the study. Each potential contributor received information about the study background, purpose, procedures, sample questions, participants' rights, benefits of the study, and participants' privacy. Teachers interested in participating emailed the words, "I consent." Data from 12 rural elementary teachers were collected using one-to-one Zoom or phone interviews.

The data collection process took approximately 3 weeks. Four participants selected Zoom interviews, and eight selected phone interviews. Each participant selected a convenient time and day to be interviewed. All participants were interviewed once. The length of each interview was between 50 and 60 minutes. Participants emailed a copy of their demographic survey before their scheduled interview. Each contributor was asked the same questions to ensure consistency in the data. During the one-to-one interviews, I maintained a reflective journal. Each interview was audio recorded using Voice Memo, an app on the iPhone 11, or the audio portion of Zoom. Before each interview, participants were reminded they could end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed the study's purpose and the research question. Each participant was asked questions based on the research question (see Appendix A). I kept a reflective journal during each interview to record thoughts and

details for reflexivity. Before each interview ended, I expressed my gratitude to each

participant, thanking them for their contribution to my study. Participants were informed

they would receive a one-page summary of the study findings. Before each phone and

Zoom interview ended, I ensured participants I would be available to answer any

questions they might have about the study.

The audio recordings from each phone and Zoom interview were transcribed

word for word. All written documents were stored in a secure locked filing cabinet, and

digital files were stored on a personal computer with protected passcodes. No

unanticipated situations took place during the data collection process. All steps of the

data collection process shared in Chapter 3 were followed accurately and appropriately in

the data collection process.

Data Analysis

In this basic qualitative study using semi structured interviews, I explored

teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States.

Each participant was asked the same open-ended questions in the same order. The audio-

recorded interviews from all 12 participants were transcribed using Microsoft Word. I

started the analysis process by reading and rereading each transcribed interview line by

line. During the transferring phase, I familiarized myself with the data.

Interview Analysis

I used Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase thematic analysis approach. The six

steps included (a) familiarizing myself with the data, (b) generating codes, (b) searching

for themes, (d) reviewing emerging themes, (e) defining and labeling themes, and (f)

creating a report (see Braun & Clarke, 2012). There were no unusual situations that affected the data analysis process.

Phase 1: Familiarizing Myself With the Data

To confirm the accuracy of the data, I compared each audio recording with the written transcripts. I printed each interview and organized them based on the order of the interview. Each participant was given a code to ensure privacy. I read and reread the transcripts being observant and aware of repetition in the data. I read the transcripts a third time and made notes as I read and created questions that developed from the reading.

Phase 2: Generating Codes

In Phase 2, I used open coding and axial coding. During the open coding phase, I read each transcript and made notes in the margins. I applied creative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis. I analyzed each line of the transcripts, hand coding and identifying key concepts and repeated segments relevant to the conceptual framework and research question. Key concepts were underlined using a variety of colors to represent each identifying code. Colored pens were used to complete the color coding. The pen colors included purple, green, yellow, blue, red, orange, and brown. Using different colors allowed me to rearrange data into codes by resemblances and other shared features. From the data analysis, 32 open codes emerged. Table 2 shows an example of 10 of the open codes, participant identifiers, and examples of excerpts from the data that fit each code.

Table 2

Examples of Open Codes

Code	Participant	Excerpt
Cares about other teachers	T9	"I have felt my experience at the school has been like having another family. They help you, teach you, lead you, pray for you, and love you."
	T2	"My team is amazing! I love the grade level I'm in."
Calling	T10	"Teaching is a calling, a ministry."
	T7	I would tell them it is definitely a calling."
Lack of consistency	T3	"The toughest part about people coming and going is the inconsistency in training new folks."
	T6	"In our particular school, there has been some serious administrator inconsistency in the last 5-6 years."
Teacher support	T8	"I need to know that I have the confidence and support of admin."
	T9	"More help in the classroom. I have more students that are EIP or SPED this year and many are disruptive in the class or other issues."
Handling difficulty situations	T1	"I ask myself what the best way is to handle this that helps the student, myself or the parent."
	T5	"To help with challenging situations, I often talk with other teachers that I work with for help, and we work as a team to help with these situations."
Professional training	T9	"Collaboration, training, mentoring, improve work environment, keeping up to date with work technology, provide leadership opportunities, and reaching out to the community."
	T8	"Empathy training - I think a lot of teachers get frustrated with student behaviors but may not really understand where each student is coming from."
Cares about students	T7	"I love the students that I work with…They represent the various ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds."
	T1	"I can say that we care for our students and want what is best for them. I am proud to be a part of this school."
Teacher positions	T2	"Filling the vacancy with a qualified person in a timely manner."
	T1	"The hardest part of having teachers leave is filling those positions and allowing that person to learn the school system requirements/expectations."
Balance	T4	"My advice would be to find a good life/work balance."
	T1	"Leave schoolwork at school."
Grade team	T7	"The grade team that I work with is amazing. We collaborate on everything that we do."
	T8	"It is hard to get used to a new team every year."

After the open coding phase, I used axial coding to examine the initial codes and develop categories. I created charts to assess the codes in a visual format using Microsoft Word. I identified codes that were similar and related to the research question. The charts were used to identify common associations and links between the codes to generate categories. Each category was color coded using a specific color. By using specific colors, I was able to identify and assign nine categories. Table 3 includes 18 open codes and nine categories along with participant identifiers and excerpts from the data.

Table 3

Examples of Open Codes and Categories

Category	Code	Participant	Excerpt
Relationships	Cares about teachers	T6	"Personally, to see good teachers come and go is disheartening. When someone comes to our school, they are joining our family, and it is difficult to see them leave."
	Cares about students	T9	"The hardest part of teachers leaving or exiting the profession is that they may be the one that can reach and teach those students that are hard to reach and teach."
Inconsistency	Lack of consistency	T2	"Consistency with admin and expectations seem to play a big role in teacher retention."
	Turnover	T1	"Within four years, I have had 3 different principals, that has been a challenge in itself because you must learn their expectations."
Support	Teacher support	T4	"A mentor program for new teachers, support to help them be successful in the classroom (curriculum-related, classroom management, etc."
	Administrative support	T8	"Support should not just be academic support, but emotional support also."
Strategies	Handling difficult situations	T9	"Try to talk with those involved, discipline as necessary, and if need be, let someone in administration know what is going on."
	Balance	T4	"Don't make school your entire life... set boundaries. Find ways to de-stress at home with hobbies, exercise, etc."
Intrinsic motivation	Rewarding	T3	"It is difficult yet rewarding."
	Fulfilling	T11	"I would remind them of all the benefits as well as fulfillment we get to experience."
Positive work environment	Family atmosphere	T9	"I have felt my experience at the school has been like having another family."
	Grade team	T10	"Grade team works together well."
Challenges	Teacher positions	T1	"It is especially harder if someone leaves during the middle of the year because that job falls on someone else in that grade level or team."
	Constant change	T5	"I haven't had an administrator stay long enough to know."
Teacher approaches	Student behavior	T1	"Depending on the situation, I try to give myself time to think about the issue at stake. I ask myself what the best way is to handle this so that it helps the student, myself or the parent."
	Practiced procedures	T10	"Routines are established from day 1, student conferences happen often, redirecting, moving clips, reward good behavior, dojo points for prizes, prize day on Fridays, contact parent, last resort is office."
Mindset	Calling	T6	"If this is not something one is "called" or meant to do, one will be miserable."
	Teaching gets better with time	T12	"I would also tell them that as they get more experienced, that parents get easier to deal with and those administrators have more trust in your abilities as a teacher."

Using axial coding, I was able to identify nine categories that supported the research question.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis were used to identify patterns and develop flexible themes. I used thematic data analysis to evaluate the data and arrange coded data into categories. The demographic information was used to cross-reference emerging themes to find any mutual tendencies among participants' replies. The demographic information was also used to draw conclusions in connection to any discrepant cases and the research question. For member checking purposes, I provided each participant with a one-page summary of the analyzed data. Participants had no disputes with the summary and had no further comments to contribute.

The four themes that emerged included (a) inconsistency among school staff, (b) intrinsic motivation to remain in the classroom, (c) various strategies to remain in the classroom, and (d) significance of relationships and support. I used thematic data analysis to review the newly created themes with the categorical data. I continued refining themes and identifying relations with the themes that connected to the research question.

Phase 4: Reviewing the Themes

During Phase 4, I evaluated the thematic data two more times. I created a visual map with the newly created themes. To ensure trustworthiness and credibility within the study, a peer debriefer who had a solid understanding of qualitative research, and the phenomena reviewed the thematic data. The peer debriefer reviewed the thematic data for suitability of the emerging themes with the categorical data. Using a peer debriefer

allowed for reflexivity of any biases within my study. I also used Braun and Clarke's (2012) key questions to help in further identifying potential themes:

- Is this a theme? (it could be just a code)

- What is the quality of this theme? (is it useful to the dataset or research question)

- What are the boundaries of the theme? (what does it include or leave out)

- Are there enough data to support each theme?

- Are the data too diverse or wide-ranging?

Using these questions, I confirmed alignment between the themes and conceptual framework, related literature, and the research question. During Phase 4 no revisions were made.

Phase 5: Defining and Labeling Themes

The themes that emerged in the data review included a) teachers described inconsistency among school staff b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom c) teachers used various strategies to remain in the classroom d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support. After comprehensive analysis of the data, I was able to answer the research question: What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in schools in the Southeast United States?

All participants identified inconsistency within their school with either administration or teachers, mainly new teachers. Participants also described their perspective of teaching as rewarding, fulfilling, and a calling. All 12 participants shared

strategies they used to help them remain in the classroom. Each participant placed

significance on relationships and support with teachers, students, parents, administrators,

and the community. No revisions were made to the newly created themes in Phase 5.

Table 4 shows a representation of the nine categories and four themes identified during

thematic analysis. Research Question 1: What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in

the rural classroom in the Southeast United States?

Table 4

Categories and Themes

Category	Theme
Inconsistency	Theme 1: Teachers described inconsistency among school staff.
Challenges	
Intrinsic motivation	Theme 2: Intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom.
Mindset	
Strategies	Theme 3: Teachers used various strategies to remain in the classroom.
Teacher approaches	
Relationships	Theme 4: Teachers placed significance on relationships and support.
Support	
Positive work environment	

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final phase in Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis is to

complete a concluding review of the themes and write about the results. Once my in-

depth analysis of the data was complete, I confirmed the four concluding themes and

answered the research question. There was no evidence of conflicting findings in the

data, so I concluded that no added analysis was needed. If there had been inconsistency in

the data, I would have explained the discrepancies among the findings. The four themes

were used to provide information on the research question regarding teachers'

perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom.

Results of the Study

Theme-1: Teachers Described Inconsistency Among the School Staff

Inconsistency Among Teachers

All 12 participants identified inconsistency among teachers in their school. T6 felt

the inconsistency in her school was a contributing factor to her school's poor teacher

retention rates. T6 said, "The issues that have come about with lack of consistency are

wearing thin on everyone, and I believe that is a huge factor in the retention rate at our

school." T3 elaborated:

> As a classroom teacher, the toughest part about teachers coming and going is the
>
> inconsistency in training new folks. Just because someone has taught in the past,
>
> they still need someone (other than the classroom teachers) showing them the
>
> "ropes" and delivering training for programs used. As a classroom teacher, I have
>
> had to train so many new folks, which takes its toll on a person over time
>
> (considering all the other duties and responsibilities we already have on our
>
> plates).

T10 conveyed in her current school, there were few veteran teachers left. T10

stated:

> This is the first year in a while in my current school. There were a lot of new
>
> teachers this year. First year teachers. There is always a great learning curve for

new teachers. COVID made absences more difficult. Young teachers getting married and having babies is also an obstacle due to extended absences.

Five of the 12 participants expressed high teacher turnover in their school. T7 shared: "I've lost count of the number of teachers who have left over the past ten years." T2 added: "We seem to have high teacher turnover at our school." T5 communicated: "Many teachers come and go." T6 conveyed: "I don't have stats for turnover in the school, but there has definitely been a pretty good turnover in recent years." T3 expressed she was not certain why there was so much turnover. She said, "There is a lot of coming and going at the school. I am not certain the reason. It may be due to unforeseen circumstances and have nothing to do with the profession."

T4 explained that some of the new teachers in her school who had left the profession may not have received the support they needed to be successful. T4 shared: "We have lost teachers over the past few years that were fairly new to the profession. They struggled in the classroom, but I'm not sure they received the support or guidance they needed to help them be successful." T6 elaborated: "Those who are younger (5 years or less experience) don't seem to mind going where it's better for them."

T12 added that teacher retention rates are not only being felt in the regular education classrooms but in other departments within the school like special education. T12 stated:

> I feel like we are constantly having new teachers in and out of our school. It seems like we have very few teachers in special ed. that are the same from year to year. I feel like our special education department would benefit from an

experienced sped. led teacher. We can't have that because of the constant special education teacher turnaround.

Inconsistency Creates Difficulty for Teachers and Grad-Level Teams

Several participants mentioned the hardest part with teacher inconsistency is filling the vacant position in a timely manner with a qualified teacher. T2 communicated that one of the hardest parts about a teacher leaving her school was finding a qualified teacher replacement. T2 stated: "filling the vacancy with a qualified person in a timely manner." T1 shared:

The hardest part of having teachers leave is filling those positions and allowing that person to learn the school system requirements/expectations. It is especially harder if someone leaves during the middle of the year because that job falls on someone else in that grade level or team.

Participants also expressed the challenges of having new teachers join their grade level team year after year. T12, T8, and T3 explained the hardship it places on veteran teachers who are constantly training and mentoring new teachers on the procedures for that grade level. T12 mentioned how challenging it can be to build a solid grade level team when teachers are consistently leaving. T12 stated:

Turnover seems high at our school. A team needs a few years of working together to really start working well together. If we have someone that only lasts a year, then we feel like we have to retrain new people on how our grade works together.

T8 added how the inconsistency among teachers had impacted their grade level team and their cross-curriculum planning. T8 stated:

It is hard to get used to a new team every year. Although we are departmentalized,

we did do a lot of collaborating and discussing student's needs from subject to

subject. We also tried to cross-curricular and bring out things they were learning

with the other teachers.

T3 mentioned constantly training new teachers, and how it becomes

overwhelming responsibility over time for teachers who remain in the classroom. T3

explained "As a classroom teacher, I have had to train so many new folks, which takes its

toll on a person over time (considering all the other duties and responsibilities we already

have on our plates)."

Inconsistency Among Administration

All the participants indicated a concern with inconsistencies among school

administration. T2 commented: "We have had high administrator turnover. Consistency

with admin and expectations seem to play a big role in teacher retention." T4 shared:

"There have been lots of changes over the years, changes in administration as well as

changes with education in general." T6 shared how her school has been impacted by

inconsistency in administrators. Participant T6 stated:

I have been at my current school for 15 years. In that time, I have had four

principals and five assistant principals. There has been some serious administrator

inconsistency in the last 5-6 years. Once there is consistent leadership, I believe

that will greatly benefit our retention of teachers.

T12 elaborated: "We have had a lot of turnarounds in administration over the years. We have gone without a principal several times for months. Our school needs a principal to stay with us for a while."

Five participants shared their frustration of not having a principal in place long enough. T1 shared: "Within four years, I have had 3 different principals, that has been a challenge in itself because you must learn their expectations." T5 expressed her frustration with not having an administrator in place long enough to even know what type of support she needed. T5 stated: "I haven't had an administrator stay long enough to know."

Inconsistency Impacts Student Achievement

Several participants mentioned the impact poor teacher retention had on student achievement within their school. T11 and T9 communicated the loss of effective teachers in their school who may have had a positive impact on hard to reach students. T11 expressed how his school had lost effective teachers who helped students. T11 stated: "We have lost multiples of teachers that were incredibly beneficial to our kiddos." T9 shared "The hardest part of teachers leaving or exiting the profession is that they may be the one that can reach and teach those students that are hard to reach and teach."

Participant T7 shared that the inconsistency among veteran teachers had negatively impacted student achievement in her school. T7 elaborated "Many of our teachers who have left are veteran teachers, therefore, our instruction here at school has been tremendously impacted. As a result, student achievement has been negatively impacted." T12 said "I feel like we are constantly having new teachers in and out of our

school. Also, we have had a lot of turnarounds in administration over the years. I think

this has hurt our students."

Theme 2: Intrinsic Motivation Contributed to Teachers Remaining in the

Classroom

All 12 participants shared one commonality, intrinsic motivation for teaching and

a positive mindset about their role as an educator. Participants shared the advice they

would give a teacher who was contemplating leaving the profession. Many of the

participants shared their hopes of making a difference in students' lives and a feeling of

gratification that comes from working with children. Many of the participants used words

like "rewarding" and "calling," when describing their profession. T4 explained that

teachers who are thinking about leaving education need to remember every year is

different. T4 stated: "I would remind them that "this is just one year." Each year in

August, you get a fresh start."

Participant T1 expressed the feeling of students becoming successful readers and

the "wow" moments that reaffirmed why she continued to teach. T1 shared her advice for

teachers contemplating leaving the profession and the positive impact they have on a

student's life. T1 stated:

> I think words of encouragement are the best in tough situations. I would say
>
> things such as I hope that you understand your role in a student's life and how
>
> much you help them or leave schoolwork at school, and most importantly ask for
>
> help!

Teachers Focus on the Rewards

Five of the 12 participants mentioned the word "rewarding" or "fulfillment" when describing the teaching profession T2 expressed:

Education isn't always easy, but it is rewarding choice. I believe you either choose to stick with it & make the best of it or find something else. But then again, I can't imagine being anything other than a teacher.

T3 shared the rewards of teaching. T3 stated:

Even though there are tough days - a lot of them- that there is so much reward to gain. When a student leaves me & later contacts me to tell me what a difference I made in their life - that's what it's all about. It is difficult yet rewarding. You will probably not find that kind of feeling in any other profession.

T11 used the word "fulfillment" to describe teaching when asked, what advice he would give to a teacher who was contemplating leaving education. T11 said "Don't do it. Teaching is awesome. I would remind them of all the benefits as well as fulfillment we get to experience. I would also stress sharpening their teacher pedagogy."

T1 added: "We have a lot of other team members that are uplifting and help you see the positive side of teaching instead of the negative." T12 elaborated on how she must remain positive and stay away from teachers who do not have the same mindset.

T2 expressed:

I know that as challenging as situations can be, that every day is a different day, and that I have to stay positive and try to stay away from other teachers that are negative all the time. No school is perfect.

Teachers Felt Teaching Is a Calling

Several participants expressed that they viewed teaching as a "calling" and "ministry" when asked what advice they would give to a teacher who was contemplating leaving education. T10 stated:

Teaching is not for everyone. And people are getting harder and harder to deal with. Expect that. This is a cruel world where everyone is passing the blame and does not own responsibility. Know that. Teaching is a calling, a ministry. If you do not feel like God has placed you here, then I would search for something else. A good teacher needs to be happy and content in order to be effective. It is all about student learning.

T6 added:

Give it time. But also, be sure this is for you. I've seen a lot of college students who are pursuing the field of education for the wrong reasons. If this is not something one is "called" or meant to do, one will be miserable. This is hard work, but if it's who you are, it's so worth it.

T7 explained:

I would tell them it is definitely a calling. I do believe that not every person is created to be an educator. If someone is wanting to be a teacher, I would tell them to investigate how passionate they are about it.

Teachers Felt Teaching Improves Over Time

Six out of the 12 participants conveyed that teaching gets better over time. T11 stated: "teaching is a skill that you get better at when you focus and put the time into it." For teachers contemplating leaving education T7 shared: "If they have passion, I would

tell them that it does get better, and I would give them as much encouragement as possible." Participant T5 added "My advice is to stick with teaching a few years before making a decision, you get better at the job over time."

T12 added:

> I would recommend a new teacher to talk with their admin about changing grades or teams. Maybe they haven't found the right fit yet for them. I would also tell them that as they get more experienced, that parents get easier to deal with and that administrators have more trust in your abilities as a teacher

Theme 3: Teachers Used Various Strategies to Remain in the Classroom

Teacher Strategies for Challenging Student Behavior

All 12 participants shared strategies implemented in their everyday teaching that assist with challenging situations involving students, parents, and co-workers. T1 and T11 shared strategies for dealing with challenging students. T1 conveyed how she takes time to think about the issue at hand, before handling the situation. T1 stated "Depending on the situation, I try to give myself time to think about the issue at stake. I ask myself what the best way is to handle this so that it helps the student, myself or the parent."

T11 provided a detailed description of a strategy he used in the past when faced with a challenging student situation. T11 stated:

> Usually, I will begin to diffuse the tension. Example of strategy: speak gently, move a student's location, begin rewarding students that are not exhibiting the problem behavior, allow the student with an issue to have a break. In the event that the problem persists, I tend to choose my battles because I don't always have

to have the last word. I have also used timeouts with small explanation

conferences when the student regains control.

T3 added "If it is with a student, I usually have built a good relationship with that child,

so a quick discussion or reminder helps."

Teacher Strategies for Challenging Situations

T7 and T3 expressed their perspective on the strategies they use during

challenging situations involving parents and co-workers. T7 shared: "I build very strong

relationships with my parents and maintain clear communication. I treat my families the

way that I would want to be treated."

T3 added:

> It all depends on the situation. If it is an upset parent, I immediately contact them
>
> in person or over the phone. In most cases, it is a miscommunication issue and
>
> once it is discussed, all is good. If the issue is with a staff member, the best way to
>
> solve it is to talk to that person and come to a compromise of some sort.

T8 explained strategies she used in her classroom with challenging situations. T8

stated: "Patience and consistency are what I try to use to handle difficult situations."

Strategies to Reduce or Prevent Challenging Situations

T10 shared strategies she has implemented to reduce or prevent challenging

situations from occurring. T10 said, "routines are established from day 1, student

conferences happen often, redirecting, moving clips, reward good behavior, dojo points

for prizes, prize day on Fridays, contact parent, last resort is office." T3 explained the

value of classroom management practices when trying to reduce or prevent challenging

situations. T3 stated "Another thing that helps prevent issues in advance is to be consistent with management practices. This helps my class run smoothly, as students like to know what to expect."

Three participants shared how they seek advice from teachers or administrators in their school or teachers in other schools when trying to reduce or prevent challenging situations. T5 stated: "I often talk with other teachers that I work with for help, and we work as a team to help with these situations." T2 elaborated: "I seek the advice of coworkers or even teachers in other schools to help with challenging situations. T9 added: "I would talk with someone in administration."

Strategies for Balancing School and Home

Teachers stressed finding a balance between school and home. T4 and T1 stressed the need for new teachers to find a balance between school and home. T4 shares the strategies she uses to balance school and home. T4 stated:

Remind them that "this is just one year". Each year in August, you get a fresh start. My advice would be to find a good life/work balance. Don't make school your entire life... set boundaries. Find ways to de-stress at home with hobbies, exercise, etc. I go home, de-stress, and start the next day with a clean slate.

T1 added: "leave schoolwork at school, and most importantly ask for help!" Several participants added that teachers should not take challenging situations personally. T4 shared "I try to understand what is causing the situation. Many situations can be handled just by talking to the student to determine what is causing the behavior. Ultimately, I try to remember not to take challenging behavior personally." T8 added: "It is important (but

hard) to not take situations personal. Show the students love and respect in handling situations."

Theme 4: Teachers Placed Significance on Relationships and Support

Teachers Placed Significance on Relationships With Students

Participants placed significance on "relationships" when dealing with challenging situations involving students. Participants shared how building relationships with students can prevent or help challenging student behavior. T6 explained:

For behavior situations, I have found that the best strategy is to have established a relationship with the student already. Students, for the most part, respond better to someone- even in a discipline situation- if they know that the teacher cares for them. Really, the relationship wards off a lot of behavior trouble in the first place.

T3 explained the positive impact building relationships with students can have when students need redirecting. T3 stated "If it is with a student, I usually have built a good relationship with that child, so a quick discussion or reminder helps."

Teachers Placed Significance on Caring for Students

All 12 participants mentioned words such as "care" and "love" when asked about their experience as a teacher in their current school. T7 shared her love for her school and her diverse student population. T7 stated, "I love the students that I work with…they represent various ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds." T2 and T1 shared how they cared about all the students in their school, not just the ones in their classrooms. T2 expressed: "I love the students - not just the students in my class." T1 noted teachers in her school care about students and follow up with them. T1 shared "As a school, I see

teachers/paras following up with students that they have previously taught or mentoring students that they had. I can say that we care for our students and want what is best for them."

T5 noted the effect poor teacher retention had on student relationships at her school. T5 said, "It's hard leaving the kids that they have built a relationship with and poured so much time into, it's hard to leave that." T7 elaborated on building relationships with students and their parents. T7 shared: "I build very strong relationships with my students and parents and maintain clear communication. I treat my students and their families the way that I would want to be treated."

Teachers Placed Significance on Relationships With Other Teachers

T9 and T6 placed significance on relationships with teachers in their schools. Both T9 and T6 conveyed teachers in their schools were like family. Participant T9 stated:

> From the beginning, I have felt my experience at the school has been like having another family. They help you, teach you, lead you, pray for you, and love you. Does everyone agree on things? No. However, we learn to work with one another for the better of the students and each other.

T6 shared: "Personally, to see good teachers come and go is disheartening. When someone comes to our school, they are joining our family, and it is difficult to see them leave." T5 noted the effect poor teacher retention has on teacher relationships at her school. T5 said, "I think the hardest part for teachers leaving my school is the relationships they have built with other teachers."

Teachers Placed Significance on Their Grade-Level Team

Five of the 10 participants described their relationship with their grade level team. T1 stated: "I work with a really great team of teachers that cares about the students here. I am proud to be a part of this school." T10 added: "Our grade team works really well together." T5 explained how she can go to her grade level team for advice and direction. "I often talk with other teachers that I work with for help, and we work as a team to help with these situations." T2 shared: "My team is amazing." T7 elaborated: "The grade team that I work with is amazing. We collaborate on everything that we do."

Teachers Placed Significance on Support

Many of the participants shared their perspectives on the current support they receive from their administrators. Participants conveyed how their administrators provided them with thank you emails, snacks, awards throughout the year, meals, and a listening ear. Participants placed significance on the way their administrator supported them. T5 stated: "I do like the way my new administrator supports me with parent problems and deals with behavior, that's working for me so far." T2 shared how important it was for administrators to support them with parents and other difficult situations. T2 stated: "Admin comes to us personally before taking another person's complaint/accusations. Admin will fight for us when the best interest of the students is involved." T10 added: "Our administration purchases resources, listens, supports teacher judgment first, provides a relaxed environment where student learning is most important."

T4 shared the significance of communication, classroom supplies, the way discipline issues are handled, and the expectations for teachers. T4 stated:

> Our administrator encourages an open line of communication and truly listens to you if you take an issue to her. She provides excellent support by getting things we need in the classroom as well as handling larger discipline problems quickly and efficiently. She has high expectations but also shows respect when you do a good job. She does little things that show that she cares about you as a person.

Participant T12 added "I think that our new administrator is very supportive to us as teachers. I think that we would benefit from having her in place here for a few years. We have been without any administration for so long." Participant T11 elaborated "Our administration provides assistance with understanding choices being made at the county level, they help with students that exhibit behavior issues, and provide observations that help highlight teaching weakness and how to overcome them."

T9 shared: "The administration provides collaboration, training, mentoring, and improved work environment, up-to-date technology, leadership opportunities, and support for community outreach." T8 added "Our administration provides professional development, a sunshine club, and teacher of the month. Also, admin is pretty hands-off of day-to-day operations of your classroom. They let you teach the materials how you feel is best."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

According to Moules et al., (2017), trustworthiness is a way researchers can convince readers and themselves that their research results are worthy of consideration. To ensure trustworthiness within the study, a peer debriefer who had a solid understanding of the phenomena reviewed the interview questions for content validity. The peer debriefer was a knowledgeable and trustworthy collaborator who gave informative feedback that assisted in determining aspects of the interview questions that needed to be revised. Using peer debriefing allowed for reflexivity of any biases that may have been present within the study. By using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, I created evidence of trustworthiness for this study.

Credibility

Credibility focuses on the fit between the researcher's representation of the participant and the participant's views (Moules et al., 2017). Creditability was vital for this research study. To assure creditability and provide reflectivity, a reflective journal was kept to document theories and any biases that developed while collecting data. Using the reflective journal, I was able to increase my level of self-reflection and sustain trustworthiness during the study. Member checking was used to further ensure the creditability and validity in this study. Each participant received a one-page summary of the analyzed data. Participants had no objections or comments regarding the summary findings. To ensure creditability in this study, all teacher participants had 10 or more years of teaching experience. A peer debriefer who was familiar with the research subject

provided feedback on the interview questions. The peer debriefer provided reflexivity of any biases present within the study. Data saturation was reached after sufficient information to replicate this study was provided and coding was no longer possible.

Transferability

Transferability recognizes the generalizability of inquiry (Moules et al., 2017). Transferability achieved from the findings of a purposeful sampling of participants that were chosen and a thick description of teacher participants. Participant's credentials varied both in advanced degrees and teaching experience. All 12 participants had 10 or more years of teaching experience and held a clear and renewable teaching degree. Using thick descriptions and complete details of participant perspectives, ideas, context, and interactions, both readers and scholars can find relativeness among the study findings and their individual experiences. Readers will be able to judge the appropriateness of transferring my findings to future research or similar settings.

Dependability

According to Moules et al. (2017), to attain dependability, the researchers should ensure the research process is clearly documented, traceable, and logical. Dependability was accomplished by keeping rich documentation and consistent practices throughout the interview and data collection process. I used one to one Zoom and phone interviews to ensure rich, deep, personalized, and contextualized data. Using open-ended questions that were exclusive to the topic reduced side conversations. The order and reading of each question were the same for every participant. Throughout the data analysis, findings and interpretations within the study remained consistent and supported by the data. Rich

documentation including my personal beliefs, motives, and theories was recorded using a reflective journal and maintained throughout the research process. A comprehensive audit trail was kept throughout the research process and included reflective views, development of the findings, and research resources used for this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability centers on making sure the researcher's interpretations and findings distinctly originated from the data requiring the researcher to indicate how interpretations and conclusions were established (Moules et al., 2017). To ensure the originality of the data, a reflective journal and an audit trail was kept. The reflective journal helped me eliminate any personal bias and included detailed predispositions, self-reflections, and practices conducted during the research process. The audit trail helped to establish clear procedures for data analysis and data collection. The audit trail provided a way to reflect on the research path and assess the transparency within my study. A peer debriefer familiar with the phenomena provided both informative feedback, and motivation to explore deeper into the data to gain a better understanding of each participants perspective. I provided reasoning for each choice that was made during the research process.

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Summary

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In Chapter 4, I addressed the data analysis and the findings of my study. This study was formed from one research question and explored teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. During the data collection process, one to one semi structured interviews were used to gain the

perspective of 12 teachers with 10 or more years in the classroom. Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis were used to direct my analysis of the results. Four themes emerged, that reflected teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. For this study, the evidence of trustworthiness, with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was created during the data collection and data analysis process.

Completing the data analysis allowed me to answer the research question: RQ: What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States? Following the coding processes, four themes emerged in the data: a) teachers describe inconsistency among their school staff, b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom c) teachers used various strategies to help them remain in the classroom d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support.

The first theme established from the data analysis was teachers described inconsistency among their school staff. Participant responses revealed an absence of administrators entirely or an endless cycle of new administrators. Participants shared negative impacts that have resulted from inconsistency among administrators. The three most significant areas included teacher retention, relationships, and student achievement. Participants shared that the lack of guidance and support from an administrator had contributed to poor student achievement and teacher retention. Participants expressed the need for an administrator to stay long enough to develop relationships with the teachers and students.

The second theme established was intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom. All 12 participants expressed the personal gratification that comes along with teaching. Participants elaborated on the fulfillment and contentment they felt by being in the teaching profession. Several participants shared that although there were many difficult days in teaching, the reward of helping students and the positive impact was worth it. Several participants felt teaching is a calling and not everyone has been called to teach. Participants expressed that teaching is rewarding and gets better with time.

The third theme established was teachers used various strategies to help them remain in the classroom. All 12 participants shared how they handled challenging situations. Participants conveyed the ways they handle the stress of teaching like finding a balance between life and work. They shared approaches like exercising and hobbies for meeting that balance. A few participants expressed how new teachers did not need to make school their entire life, instead they needed to set boundaries. Participants shared how they relied on the teachers in their grade level for advice and support. They used words like "patience" and "consistency" to describe how they handled challenging students.

The fourth theme established was teachers placed significance on relationships and support. Participants shared the importance of having a strong student teacher relationship. They expressed how many student behavior problems could be solved quickly or eliminated by strong student teacher relationships. Participants also shared how much they valued their relationship with their peers. Words like "home" and

"family" were used to describe the school culture. Participants also shared how they genuinely cared for students, not just their classroom students, but all the students within their school. Participants felt teaching was the most rewarding and influential job an individual could have.

Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the results, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications. An analysis of the results for each theme is described in-depth and linked to the research question. Chapter 5 includes a detailed explanation of the limitations of this study. I provide recommendations for managing the topics and limitations for further research. The implications for the study are reviewed and the description of the potentiality for positive social change is included. I conclude Chapter 5 with a reflection of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Using one-to-one semi structured interviews, I collected data from 12 qualified elementary teachers with 10 or more years of teaching experience. Data were collected from participants' phone and Zoom interviews. Using a qualitative method, I was able to obtain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences of remaining in the rural classroom. Four themes emerged from the data analysis process including (a) teachers described inconsistency among school staff, (b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom, (c) teachers used various strategies to help them remain in the classroom, and (d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support. This study was relevant due to the limited research on teachers who remain in the classroom. I sought to fill a gap in practice concerning teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom.

In Chapter 5, I provide an interpretation of the findings and examine how the results provided a better understanding of the phenomenon. Chapter 5 also includes a comparison of the research findings with current literature and the framework, Day and Gu's (2014) resilience theory and Maslow's (1943) motivation of needs. In addition, the study implications, limitations, and recommendations are included. Using a qualitative approach, I was able to obtain an increased understanding of teachers' experiences of remaining in the rural classroom.

Interpretation of the Findings

Before the data collection process, I obtained (IRB) (#03-02-21-0539063)

approval from Walden University. The interpretations and findings for this basic

qualitative study were based on 12 one-to-one semi structured interviews, Chapter 2's

literature review, and the conceptual framework of Day and Gu's (2014) resilience theory

and Maslow's (1943) motivation of needs. This study centered on one research question:

What are teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in schools in the

Southeast United States? Four themes were generated and evaluated based on the

research question. The established results for this study were guided by the conceptual

framework in Chapter 2 and understanding of the literature. Findings in this study helped

to extend and confirm information concerning teachers' perspectives of remaining in the

rural classroom.

Theme 1: Teachers Described Inconsistency Among School Staff

Inconsistency among school staff contributed to poor teacher retention rates. The

ability to develop resilience for teachers comes as they learn to foster a sense of purpose,

develop problem-solving skills, and feel socially competent. The development of these

qualities is contingent on individual circumstances impacted by the environment (Day &

Gu, 2014). T6 said "The issues that have come about with lack of consistency are

wearing thin on everyone, and I believe that is a huge factor in the teacher retention rate

at our school."

Teacher work contentment and how it affects the school environment influence

the preservation of teachers (Dahlkamp et al., 2017). T5 said "The past few years we've

had many teachers come and go as well as administrators. No one stays long, teaching

has become high stress, and very few want to stay with it anymore." As a result of

teacher attrition, schools throughout the United States face hardships with a considerable

and constant number of qualified teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years

(Allen & Sims, 2018; Calvert & Perryman, 2020). T7 said "I've lost count of the number

of teachers who have left over the past 10 years." Researchers noted a strong association

between stress, teachers' decisions to exit the profession, and factors like low motivation,

resilience, self-efficacy, poor student outcomes, and job dissatisfaction (Bower et al.,

2020). T4 shared "We have lost some teachers over the past few years that were fairly

new to the profession. They struggled in the classroom, but I'm not sure they received the

support or guidance they needed to help them be successful."

Inconsistency in administration contributed to poor teacher retention. Researchers

noted a positive correlation between effective leaders and teacher retention (Kraft et al.,

2016; Martinez, 2019). Teacher perspectives of inconsistency among administration were

shared by all 12 participants in the current study. Administration plays a significant role

in teacher retention and fostering resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Participant T6

said "In our particular school, there has been some serious administrator inconsistency in

the last 5-6 years." Researchers noted that overall school climate and effective principal

leadership are significant in teacher job satisfaction (Ford et al., 2018; Torres, 2018). T1

said "Consistency with administration and expectations seem to play a big role in teacher

retention." Administrative support is vital for teacher resilience and a teacher's ability to

tolerate the stressors they face in the profession (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019).

Inconsistency among teachers contributed to the negative impacts on student achievement in this study. Teacher attrition creates a challenging learning environment for students and can negatively impact student achievement (Allsop & Newberry, 2017). Participant T7 said "Many of our teachers who have left are veteran teachers; therefore, our instruction here at school has been tremendously impacted. As a result, student achievement has been negatively impacted." Researchers noted high rates of teacher attrition adversely affect student success results due to differences in teaching, teacher worth, and efficiency among teachers who resign and the teachers who replace them (Bowles et al., 2019). T12 stated "I feel like we are constantly having new teachers in and out of our school. Also, we have had a lot of turnarounds in administration over the years. I think this has hurt our students."

Theme 2: Intrinsic Motivation Contributed to Teachers Remaining in the Classroom

Teaching is mostly driven by intrinsic motivation, or the inward desire to educate others, make a social contribution, and impart knowledge (Etherington & Stezycka, 2020). Maslow (1943) stressed that individuals have a natural desire to be self-actualized, implying individuals want to be all they can be. T2 said

Education isn't always easy, but it is a rewarding choice. I believe you either choose to stick with it and make the best of it or find something else. But then again, I can't imagine being anything other than a teacher.

Teachers see the profession as high stress with low benefits, yet many feel intrinsic motives were adequate reasons for pursuing the profession (Chiong et al., 2017). T3 said

> I would probably advise them that even though there are tough days - a lot of them - that there is so much reward to gain. When a student leaves me and later contacts me to tell me what a difference I made in their life - that's what it's all about. It is difficult yet rewarding. You will probably not find that kind of feeling in any other profession.

Intrinsic motivations are considered highly significant in describing teachers who persist and their accounts of the profession (Chiong et al., 2017). T11 said

> Teaching is awesome. I would remind them [teachers] of all the benefits as well as fulfillment we get to experience. I would also stress sharpening their teacher pedagogy. Teaching is a skill that you get better at when you focus and put the time into it.

It is this inner calling to the commitment to serve and teach that sets the teaching profession apart from many other occupations and jobs (Day & Gu, 2014). Participant T10 said

> Teaching is not for everyone. And people are getting harder and harder to deal with. Expect that. This is a cruel world where everyone is passing the blame and does not own responsibility. Know that. Teaching is a calling, a ministry. If you do not feel like God has placed you here, then I would search for something else.

A good teacher needs to be happy and content in order to be effective. It is all

about student learning.

Maslow (1943) stressed that individuals have a natural desire to be self-

actualized, implying individuals want to be all they can be. Participant T11 said "teaching

is a skill that you get better at when you focus and put the time into it." Motivated

teachers think critically, reflect on their teaching, and work toward methods to advance

their practices (Daniels, 2017). A teacher's efficacy views impact their motivation,

commitment, and the educational process (Bjorklund et al., 2020). T5 said "My advice is

to stick with teaching a few years before making a decision; you get better at the job over

time." Resilient teachers exhibit an aptitude for fulfillment and growth (Day & Gu,

2014).

Theme 3: Teachers Used Various Strategies to Remain in the Classroom

Teachers' use of various strategies contributed to them remaining in the

classroom. An added approach to teacher retention is to focus on teachers who have

remained in the classroom, the components that sustain them, how they navigate during

stressful situations, and how they cultivate resilience and prosper instead of merely

surviving in their work setting (Mansfield et al., 2016). T8 said "Patience and consistency

is what I try to use to handle difficult situations." Resilient teachers display successful

strategies for working with challenging students and develop greater fulfillment in their

work (Bradford & Kamrath, 2020). T12 said

I know that as challenging as situations can be, that every day is a different day, and that I have to stay positive and try to stay away from other teachers that are negative all the time. No school is perfect.

The most resilient teachers use strategies to react to stressful moments including reducing the intensity of the occurrence and interpreting and dealing with the stress's underlying cause (Aguilar, 2018). T4 said

I try to understand what is causing the situation. Many situations can be handled just by talking to the student to determine what is causing the behavior. Ultimately, I try to remember not to take challenging behavior personally. I go home, de-stress, and start the next day with a clean slate.

A teacher's capability and aspirations to teach are influenced by the degree to which they positively adapt to their careers (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Fostering resilience requires an awareness of emotions coupled with responding constructively when intense feelings and difficult situations arise (Brown et al., 2018). T3 said

It all depends on the situation. If it is an upset parent, I immediately contact them in person or over the phone. In most cases, it is a miscommunication issue and once it is discussed, all is good. If it is with a student, I usually have built a good relationship with that child, so a quick discussion or reminder helps. Another thing that helps prevent issues in advance is to be consistent with management practices. This helps my class run smoothly, as students like to know what to expect. If the issue is with a staff member, the best way to solve it is to talk to that person and come to a compromise of some sort.

A resilient teacher focuses on identifying individual strengths while considering the type of environmental context and the seriousness of the difficulty (Day, 2014). T1 said "Depending on the situation I try to give myself time to think about the issue at stake. I ask myself what the best way is to handle this so it that helps the student, myself, or the parent."

Theme 4: Teachers Placed Significance on Relationships and Support

When dealing with difficult situations and inconsistency in school, teachers relied on relationships and support to help them remain in the classroom. Teachers placed significance on both relationships and support with coworkers, students, administrations, parents, and the community. Although relationships and support were not part of my research question or literature review, this theme emerged in responses from all 12 participants. The contextual impacts related to teacher adaptation include participation in the decision-making process, school culture, support from coworkers, and relationships with administrators (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

A teacher's self-efficacy or noted beliefs in their abilities to efficiently manage the duties, responsibilities, and difficulties associated with their profession plays a vital role in influencing central academic outcomes and contentment in the work setting (Barni et al., 2019). Participant T6 said

For behavior situations, I have found that the best strategy is to have established a relationship with the student already. Students, for the most part, respond better to someone- even in a discipline situation- if they know that the teacher cares for them. Really, the relationship wards off a lot of behavior trouble in the first place.

A teacher's capability and aspirations to teach are influenced by the degree to which they positively adapt to their careers (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). T7 said

> I very rarely send students to the office. I feel that I handle it much better myself. I build very strong relationships with my parents and maintain clear communication. I treat my students and their families the way that I would want to be treated.

Resilient teachers can acknowledge the truth and find purpose in adversity (Djourova et al., 2019). T3 said

> It all depends on the situation. If it is an upset parent, I immediately contact them in person or over the phone. In most cases, it is a miscommunication issue and once it is discussed, all is good. If it is with a student, I usually have built a good relationship with that child, so a quick discussion or reminder helps.

> According to the belonging level of Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation, teachers need to feel acceptance and belonging among their peers. Cherry (2019) noted that emotional affiliation prompts human performance. T9 said

> From the beginning, I have felt my experience at the school has been like having another family. They help you, teach you, lead you, pray for you, and love you. Does everyone agree on things? No. However, we learn to work with one another for the better of the students and each other.

> T6 said "Personally, to see good teachers come and go is disheartening. When someone comes to our school, they are joining our family, and it is difficult to see them leave."

The participants in this study received support from their coworkers, administration, parents, and the community, contributing to their ability to remain in the classroom. According to Bonato (2019), teachers leave the profession because of isolation and lack of support. Listening to practicing teachers will provide an understanding of the type of support that might help them remain in education (Burgess et al., 2018). Administrative support is vital for teacher resilience and a teacher's ability to tolerate the stressors they face in the profession (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019). T4 said

> Our administrator encourages an open line of communication and truly listens to you if you take an issue to her. She provides excellent support by getting things we need in the classroom as well as handling larger discipline problems quickly and efficiently. She has high expectations, but also shows respect when you do a good job. She does little things that show that she cares about you as a person.

Positive relationships with administrators, colleagues, and students provide support for teachers during difficult times. Teachers with proven student achievement and development in instruction need to be considered an irreplaceable asset valued and supported so schools can create and sustain success (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Findings from this study can help administrators and county leaders become familiar with the perspectives of teachers and the importance they place on relationships and support. Administrators can gain understanding from the 12 participants in this study and their keenness to develop relationships and support in a challenging profession. Participants focused on the positives of teaching, like relationships, their calling, the rewards, and the

support they received from administrators. All 12 participants showed resilience by finding balance and being committed despite the poor teacher and administrative retention rates in their school.

Limitations of the Study

Possible limitations in this study included participant availability and researcher bias. Due to the recent crisis caused by COVID -19 and the transition to virtual learning, teachers face unique situations (Aaviku et al., 2021). As a result of COVID -19, teachers are managing their normal duties, along with teaching in person, virtual and quarantined students; therefore, limiting their availability. To address this limitation, participants were provided a wide range of interview times. For participant convenience, I also provided a choice between Zoom or phone interviews.

As a former elementary teacher, I had my personal views regarding teachers who remained in the elementary classroom. To address researcher bias, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the data collection and analysis process to avert inferring biases and assumptions. Being reflexive allowed me to set aside my own biases and directed my attention solely to the collection and interpretation of the data. To ensure trustworthiness, I kept a reflective journal of participant's perspectives. Thematic analysis was used to identify and ensure the dependability of all themes. A comprehensive audit trail was kept throughout the research process and included reflective views, development of the findings, and research resources used for this study. By keeping an audit trail, I was able to ensure my interpretation of the findings remained unbiased. Through this study, I was able to confirm some of the research results and theories from the conceptual

framework concerning teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States.

Recommendations

This basic qualitative study explored teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in elementary schools located in the Southeastern United States. Participants included in this study identified inconsistency among school staff; intrinsic motivation contributes to teachers remaining in the classroom; teachers use various strategies to help them remain in the classroom; teachers place significance on relationships and support. Participants believed the poor retention rate in their school was a direct result of the inconsistency among staff. Participants trusted their intrinsic motivation when reflecting or contemplating leaving the classroom. Participants trusted their strategies to help them deal with challenging situations. Participants trusted their school relationships and the support they received to help them remain in the classroom. The study findings support the gaps in research on practices regarding teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. I have included the following recommendation for future research.

I recommend a follow-up study that includes a larger population of teachers from both rural and urban-centric elementary schools. A comparison of rural and urban-centric elementary schools may provide similar results or provide additional factors that could help improve the understanding of teachers' perspectives of remaining in the classroom. The second recommendation includes a study focused on teacher perspectives of how school relationships impact teacher retention. The reviewed literature made no mention of

teacher relationships with regards to teacher retention. The data collected during this study revealed teachers place significance on relationships when it comes to remaining in the teaching profession. This represents a gap in practice.

The third recommendation is administrators, district leaders, and teachers who have remained in the classroom 10 or more years develop professional learning that facilitates teacher relationships. Administrators must acknowledge the impact teacher relationships have on teachers who persist in the classroom. This may prevent new teachers from becoming discouraged and ultimately leaving the profession.

Implications

This study may contribute to positive social change by providing teachers who have persisted in the classroom a chance to share their knowledge of remaining in a rural school with poor retention rates. This study may provide a deeper understanding into the negative impacts poor teacher retention can have on schools. This study may lead to administrators and school leaders developing professional learning that centers on factors that help teachers remain in the classroom. School administrators may develop a strategic model that includes strategies for building teacher relationships, strategies for handling difficult situations, ways intrinsic motivation can assist teachers, and the perspective of teachers who have remained in the classroom 10 or more years.

Participants

Participants in this study shared the difficulties of working in a school with both teacher and administrator inconsistencies. The most noted challenge among participants was administrative inconsistency. All 12 participants discussed school struggles that

included administrators coming and going. This supported the findings of other studies. Researchers note a positive correlation between effective leaders and teacher retention (Kraft et al., 2016; Martinez, 2019). All 12 participants placed significance on relationships and support. Participants conveyed developing relationships with students could prevent challenging behavior. They also stressed the importance of developing and maintaining relationships with co-workers and administration. Participants mentioned because they built relationships with their co-workers, they were able to seek their advice and assistance when dealing with difficult situations. Participants also referred to their co-workers as "family." Suggestions for positive social change include teachers willingly sharing strategies and concerns with administrators and together they collaborate on solutions.

Administration

Administration could use the findings from this study to develop professional learning that involves teachers who have remained in the classroom. When teachers who persist in the classroom are empowered and able to have a voice, the results can include a decline in attrition rates (Durham et al., 2018). Suggestions for positive social change include an increased understanding of teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom. Resilient teachers who maintain their commitment, motivation, and effectiveness despite difficult working conditions can provide policymakers and school leaders with approaches to retaining highly qualified teachers (Day and Gu, 2007a). According to Carrillo and Flores (2018), there is much to understand and learn from the careers of teachers who persist in the classroom.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Limited research exists on teacher retention with a focus on teachers who remain in the classroom. Much of the research is focused on teachers who leave the classroom. I interviewed 12 participants and explored their perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Participants were direct about their experiences and difficulties on remaining in the classroom.

Four themes emerged from the data including (a) teachers described inconsistency among school staff, (b) intrinsic motivation contributed to teachers remaining in the classroom, (c) teachers used various strategies to help them remain in the classroom, (d) teachers placed significance on relationships and support. The findings of this study fill the gap in practice by contributing to an increased understanding of teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States.

Teachers who persist in the classroom have adapted and developed strategies for handling the challenges that come with teaching. My study provided new knowledge on teachers' perspectives of remaining in the rural classroom in the Southeast United States. Little research exists on the impact's teacher relationships can have on teacher retention. The data from this study may provide administrators and district leaders with a deeper understanding of teacher relationships and how they relate to teacher retention. These study results may provide administrators and district leaders with understanding into the strategies and intrinsic motivations teachers use to persist in the classroom.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What can you tell me about your experience as a teacher in your current
   school?
2. What is the hardest part about teachers leaving your school or exiting the
   profession?
3. Tell me about teacher retention in your school?
4. What are some ways to improve poor teacher retention?
5. Tell me about your needs as a classroom teacher?
6. When faced with challenging situations in your classroom, how do you
   respond and what strategies do you use to handle difficult situations?
7. What advice would you give to a teacher who is contemplating leaving
   education?
8. What types of professional development opportunities do you believe
   would support teachers and help with teacher retention?
9. Tell me ways your administrator supports teachers that seems to
   improve retention in your school?

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

1.) What is the highest level of degree received in your profession?

      Bachelor   Masters   Postgraduate

2.) What is your level of teaching experience?

    10-20 Years   20-30 Years   30+ Years

3.) What grade do you currently teach? _____

4.) To which gender identity do you most identify? _____ (Optional)

5.) Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin? (Optional)

       ○ Yes ○ No 3. Race (check all that apply)

       ○ American Indian or Alaskan Native

       ○ Asian

       ○ Black or African American

       ○ Indigenous

       ○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander