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Frequent Superintendent Succession: The Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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2015

Abstract

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MEd, Texas State University, 1996

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Fulfillment

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Abstract

A superintendent is vital to the success of school districts. Stability of an individual in this position is important for building trust and morale for district personnel over time. Small school districts in a large southern state have experienced increased rates of voluntary or involuntary superintendent succession, having had 2 or more superintendent changes within a 6-year period. Participative leadership theory served as the framework for this study. The guiding questions for this study investigated the impact of frequent superintendent succession in small school districts and the levels of trust and morale among district personnel. The variables for the study were superintendent succession between the years 2005 and 2011 and personnel trust and morale. Data were collected from Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small School Districts and Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale surveys. Quantitative analysis of the survey data was conducted using the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient and chi-square analysis. Key findings indicated a significant relationship between frequent superintendent succession and decreased personnel trust and no significant relationship between morale of personnel. Chi-square correlation for trust showed a correlation to turnover and morale showed no correlation. It is recommended that districts provide training for school boards on the impact of frequent superintendent succession with an emphasis on administrative stability to enhance morale and trust among personnel. These actions could contribute to positive social change by building leadership capacity and sustaining high levels of morale and trust among district personnel.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my beautiful family for their patience. I am blessed to have such a wonderful and strong wife and understanding children. I also dedicate this opportunity to my parents. Papa Joe only had a sixth grade education, but his abilities to adapt and overcome have been an inspiration. Momma did not make it past the 10th grade, but her wisdom and strength, as the "rock" of my family, has given me strength and perseverance. You both are with me always.

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Introduction

The position of superintendent is vital to the success of school districts. Stability of an individual in this position is important for building trust and morale for district personnel over time. Lack of stability for this position, due to high rates of voluntary or involuntary superintendent turnover, may result in a decreased sense of staff morale and satisfaction creating uncertainty, uneasiness, and the eventual turnover of teachers (Alsbury, 2008; Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010). Williams and Hatch (2012) stated that short tenures cannot support successful and sustainable change for school districts. Superintendent tenures as brief as 2.5 years have contributed to a negative sense of crisis in the quality of new superintendents and the quality leaders in these positions (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). On the other hand, stability of the superintendent position has been found to have a positive correlative impact on the success of any school district, regardless of the size (Alsbury, 2008). Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between the length of superintendent tenure and academic achievement of students (Council of Urban Boards of Education, 2001; Simpson, 2013; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Developing trust and morale among stakeholders is challenging for superintendents. In a study of eight superintendents by Wright and Harris (2010), all agreed that understanding the superintendent's beliefs were necessary to lead a district. To create the open environment of trust and high morale in seeking solutions to problems would be the object of a superintendent's use of a cadre in identifying or establishing

district goals and working to develop a common identity (Wright & Harris, 2010).

Allowing each member to integrate information toward the completion and submission of

a project could assist in the building of morale within the group and toward the

superintendent. The predicament of superintendents leaving districts voluntarily or

involuntarily describes the term superintendent succession (Alsbury, 2008). With a

perceived drop in trust and morale due to superintendent successions, a challenge

develops for any new district leader, as the need for positive trust and morale is required

for a successful learning environment (Alsbury, 2008; Fullan, 2005; Wright & Harris,

2010). Wright and Harris (2010) suggested superintendent longevity and background

knowledge of issues was advantageous for the superintendent. Employing openness could

assist in the superintendents' attempt to build trust and morale within a group of district

personnel. The direct interaction and open communication will provide for positive staff

morale and create the constructive learning environments that are required for student

success (Wright & Harris, 2010). The research required to evolve to the next level of

understanding as it pertains to the development of positive personnel trust and morale

toward the superintendent position or person, subordinate, and superintendent data must

be collected and used to develop understanding of the factors (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe,

2008). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2012) stated that research examining

superintendent turnover related to district reform and improvement is scarce. This study

will seek to determine the influence of frequent turnover of small district superintendents

on the level of trust and morale among district personnel.

Purpose Statement

There is a problem in small school districts of a large southern state. The problem is the increased rates of superintendent succession. Data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) database showed that between the 1994/1995, 1995/1996, and 1996/1997 school years, 55% of Texas school districts with less than 1,000 students had a new superintendent in the first 3 years of tenure in the district (Texas Association of School Boards & Texas Association of School Administrators, 2008). The districts with less than 1,000 students represented 45.9% of the total districts in Texas. Issues of school politics and accountability were areas identified as factors requiring the attention of school district leadership, which is inclusive of school boards, superintendents, and all stakeholders (Trevino, Braley, Brown, & Slate, 2008). The continued political practice of control in districts continues the elevated superintendent succession rate (Trevino et al., 2008). This problem may influence personnel morale and trust due to a short lived relationship with the superintendent (Trevino et al., 2008). Many possible factors contribute to this problem, among which are district accountability, school board relations, community relations, and staff relations (Trevino et al., 2008). The superintendent indirectly and systemically influences the design of the instructional and organizational outcomes on academic performance of a school district (Hoyle et al., 2005). The culmination of these factors are issues that have increased the issue of superintendent succession in small Texas districts (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; Leithwood, 2003; Trevino et al., 2008). Increased accountability requirements from the Texas Education Agency (2010) for instruction and testing have placed increased stress

on the superintendent position (Trevino et al., 2008). Data from a study showed a 3-year superintendent turnover rate in approximately 70% of districts with low performing Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) math and reading scores (Trevino et al., 2008).

The superintendent is responsible for oversight of instructional quality for the entire school system (Byrd et al., 2006). As the system's instruction leader, it is critical that the superintendent communicate effectively with all stakeholders regarding the district's strategic plan, key instructional strategies, and priority results to move the district's mission forward (Hoyle et al., 2005). Tenure and the ability to make a systemic change can be factors impacting superintendent turnover and the development of a positive culture (Williams & Hatch, 2012). However, frequent superintendent succession impacts district efforts to improve instructional programs because of the time needed for stakeholders to learn and adapt to the leadership and communication styles and the educational philosophy of the next district leader (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Moreover, the relationship between the superintendent and the school board can be a factor in turnover rate of superintendents in small, rural school districts (Byrd et al., 2006). Byrd et al. (2006) found that 32.7% of the superintendents who changed jobs had experienced a difficult relationship with the school board president. Further, Farmer (2009) reported that he found that small and rural school district superintendent turnovers were influenced by school board members wanting a certain person hired or particular actions taken that went against superintendent recommendations. School boards in small communities were reported to have a greater influence on decision making that can

impact the effectiveness of the superintendent (Alsbury, 2003; Byrd et al., 2006).

Additionally, nonagenda items addressed by the board and overinvolvement in minor

matters created conditions leading to the superintendent deciding to go to another district

or retire (Byrd et al., 2006). Several studies confirmed that conflict with the leadership

and politics are major factors in school superintendent succession (Baker et al., 2010;

Copeland, 2013; Grissom, 2010; Grissom, in press). Poor superintendent and school

board relations, disagreements over educational priorities, and conflict with the school

board are three reasons for short superintendent tenures (Eaton & Sharp, 1996).

Accordingly, the relationship between the superintendent, school board members, staff,

and community members in small, rural school districts can impact the rate of

superintendent turnover (Grissom, 2010). Furthermore, the Center for Public Education

(2011) stated that the positive and stable relationship of a board and superintendent is

directly related to positive district outcomes.

Community members and school district personnel in small, rural school districts

may have expectations of the superintendent outside of his or her work in the school

district such as assisting in community development and blending community and

educational leadership strategy (Harmon & Schafft, 2009; Jones & Howley, 2009;

Kowalski, Young, & Peterson, 2013). Jones and Howley (2009) described the

superintendent function as involving managerial, educational, and political roles based on

Cuban (1988) and Johnson's (1996) typologies. As a manager, the superintendent

exercises authority over personnel, finance, and facilities and strives to ensure

organizational stability while also making the district accountable to the public. As an

educational leader, the superintendent formulates the district's vision, focusing particularly on curriculum and instruction. The superintendent's political role involves negotiating with diverse interest groups to reach agreement about district priorities, policies, and resource allocation (Alsbury, 2008; Byrd et al., 2006). Cuban (1998) claimed that the superintendent job comes with "conflicting goals of building literate citizens, preparing workers for the marketplace, and cultivating individual character" (p. 56). The limits of available human and financial resources conflict with the goals of the superintendent creating "grim effects" on the efforts of leadership (Cuban, 1998, p. 56).

Superintendent vacancies can create apprehension, uncertainty, and low morale for staff members and may impact perceptions others have of the school district (Alsbury, 2008). Some of these perceptions may be that the morale in the district is low, and the district has lost its organizational direction and vision (Alsbury, 2008). As school districts move through the cycles of superintendent succession, these perceptions continue. The influence of the personnel morale, due to the close interaction of the superintendent, may evolve at a faster rate than larger districts that have several bureaucratic levels below the superintendent (Grissom, 2010). With a higher rate of superintendent turnover, the morale of the staff decreases, and an increased sense of dissatisfaction and eventual teacher turnover will result (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). Researchers have also premised that district-wide turmoil occurs if the turnover was an involuntary act by the superintendent (Alsbury, 2008). Superintendents in small districts may be the only high position executive in the community and may be subject to public criticism (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). The superintendent must be a generalist because the daily tasks inherent

to the position go beyond responsibility for education (Copeland, 2013; Firestone, 2009) and subjects the superintendent to increased scrutiny by community members and school district personnel (Harmon & Schafft, 2009; Jones & Howley, 2009). To interact positively within the school and community, the superintendent requires ample time to become part of a community web that includes environmental, personal, and in-school relationships that influence organizational outcomes with the outcome of student success (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008). It is essential that the superintendent have effective communication and develop positive relationships with all stakeholders in order to establish a positive environment that will nurture the possibilities of an extended tenure (Jones & Howley, 2009; Kowalski, Young, Peterson, 2013; Trevino et al., 2008). Hence, extended superintendent tenures may assist in establishment of high personnel morale.

Further, frequent superintendent succession may create a perception of instability in a school district. The faculty and staff in school districts who experience frequent superintendent turnover typically develop strategies for coping with the leadership change as a result of involuntary turnovers. Often times the initiatives and programs initiated by the previous superintendent are abandoned and resistance to future change by staff impacts the trust and efforts of the new superintendent (Yee & Cuban, 1996). Additionally, individuals entering the superintedency may begin their careers in small, rural school districts (Alsbury, 2008). If the expectation is that the superintendent tenure will be limited, the ability to build trust in morale among personnel may be a challenge (Alsbury, 2008).

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this correlation study was to examine school district personnel perceptions of the level of trust and morale in the school districts of a large southern state. Of particular interest was the effect of the frequent succession of superintendents of small school districts, with 429 or less high school students, on the level of trust and morale of school district personnel. The succession rate of superintendents covered a 6-year period between 2005 and 2011. The target population of this study was small school districts that may have experienced multiple superintendent changes between 2005 and 2011.

I designed a survey that was used to assess personnel trust and morale to gather quantitative data for this study. Currently, 512 school districts in the large southern state are classified as 1A or 2A districts (UIL, 2010). Due to the large number of school districts, the use of electronic media allowed for each small district to be invited to participate in the study. Each small district school superintendent determined if the district met the small school criteria. Personnel from the school districts who met the researcher's criteria of a small school district (UIL, 2010) were the population for this study. Because no system currently exists for recording the superintendent succession rates in school districts that met the identified criteria, the number of school districts and district employees selected to participate in this study was determined by the school district size across the large southern state. A request to participate in the study was sent to each of the 20 Regional Education Center directors requesting that they forward the survey to all district superintendents in their region. The superintendents of districts who

met the criteria established for this study had the option of having personnel from their district participate in this study. Also, the survey participation was anonymous; as a result, no contact was made with any of the participants. Completion and submission of the survey was considered consent for participation. Section 3 provides an in depth discussion of the methodology that was used for this study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study was guided by one overarching research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust and morale among district personnel? The research focused on two specific research questions and their hypotheses.

Research Question 1. What correlation does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel trust?

H_{o1}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

H_{a1}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

Research Question 2. What correlation does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel morale?

H_{o2}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and the level of morale in among school district personnel.

H_{a2}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and level of morale among school district personnel.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this correlational study was to investigate the relationship between superintendent succession rates and the level of trust and morale of school district personnel. A superintendent succession rate was one variable and the levels of trust and morale of school district personnel were the other observed variables.

Theoretical Framework

This study used the participative leadership theory described by Somech (2005) as a collaborative or shared influence in decision making by a leader and the employees and the potential for decision making benefits. The active participation increases the level of commitment and the willingness to carry out work as it leads to the accomplishment of the desired outcome. Somech (2005) found that participative leadership engenders a sense of ownership where personnel may be more apt to place a higher level of acceptance of information discovered through their dialogue and interaction instead of information presented from the superintendent or an outside source (Somech, 2005). Trust in the system and administration increases because of the validation as professionals with a voice and input in decision making. This style of leadership also

allows the opportunity to take risk and attempt innovative strategies. The open

environment allows for the sharing of information and opinions that will assist in the

finding of solutions to the issues in question (Hentsche, Nayfack, & Wohlsetter, 2009;

Laub, 2010; Somech, 2005).

Goenz (2009) stated that leadership is very complex because the essence of the

relationships is the ultimate determination in the district success and effectiveness of

policies. Long term relationships of the superintendent and staff will show the effects of

leadership through outcomes, coalitions, collaborations, and motivation of staff. The

importance of a new superintendent developing authentic relationships of trust is a key

factor toward the development of improved personnel morale and student success

(Brooking, 2008). Repeated social interaction, by the superintendent, involving

individuals in easy, low-risk activities is potentially more important for building trust. It

allows for engaged involvement but retains the levels of authority within a system. It is

important for superintendents to involve subordinates in shared decision making and

focus on their opinions, feelings, and decisions. The superintendent should focus on the

process of involvement more than the solutions that arise from the process (Somech,

2005).

According to Cook and Johnston (2008), it is essential for the superintendent to

openly admit errors rather than hide mistakes. The opportunities will allow for the

focusing on mistakes and using them as learning opportunities to discuss the situation and

engage in problem solving rather than using the opportunity to point out fault in the

incident or in the individuals. Being open to correction displays the characteristic of

willfully assessing oneself in order to move forward. District staff will observe the example and in turn be open to corrective measures in order to improve professionally (Cook & Johnston, 2008). Allowing for the shared opinions and correction in situations will allow the superintendent to increase the success of district responsibilities and nurture the development of the district structure that will assist in superintendent responsibilities (Firestone, 2009; Garza, 2008). These qualities may allow the superintendent to develop relationships through a leadership style that empowers employees. Furthermore, trust in the system and administration increases because of the validation as professionals with a voice and input in decision making (Cook & Johnston, 2008). The open environment allows for the sharing of information and opinions that will assist in the finding of solutions to the issues in question.

Operational Definitions

The following terms and phrases are defined as used in this study.

Small school district: For the purpose of this study, a small school is defined as school district that serves 429 or less high school students (UIL 2010).

Morale: "This term refers to the relative mental/emotional valence of positive or negative energy of an individual or of a group of individuals (as in a school staff)" (Meyer, MacMillan, & Northfield, 2009, p. 173).

Trust: Each party in a relationship maintains an understanding of his or her obligations and holds some expectations about the obligations of the other parties (Coburn & Russell, 2008).

Superintendent succession: For the purpose of this study, succession is defined as school districts that have experienced two or more voluntary or involuntary superintendent changes within a 6-year period (Alsbury, 2008).

Scope and Delimitations

The first established boundary for this study was that only identified school districts located in a large southern state with a high school student population of 429 or less were included in this study. These school districts may have had multiple superintendents within a 6-year period, between 2005 and 2011. The study was limited to investigating the effect of superintendent succession on the level of trust and morale of school district personnel. The study did not assess leadership styles, superintendent seniority, work experience, educational qualifications, and their effects on personnel trust and morale. No determination was made as to the effect of superintendent succession on school and student performance as well as attrition or turnover rates of teachers and school administrators.

Assumptions

I assumed that participants would answer the survey questions honestly. In this research design, the participants having previously completed the survey could discuss the answers with a future participant and therefore influence answers of the personnel member who has not participated in the survey regarding the morale and trust levels. The sharing of opinions is described as diffusion of treatment and is described as participants in the control and experimental groups communicating with each other (Creswell 2009). This communication can influence correlations of the outcomes.

Limitations

The study was limited to school districts of a large southern state with a high

school student population of 429 or fewer students that may have had multiple

superintendents over a 6-year period, between 2005 and 2011. This study was also

limited to personnel who had worked for the school districts during the time frame of

2005 and 2011. The survey was forwarded by the district superintendents, if the

personnel were allowed to participate. District personnel who chose to participate in this

study may have similar characteristics and may not be a sufficient representative of the

population. Time and access to district email were limitations that could influence the

number of willing participants.

Significance of the Study

Research revealed an environment of increased anxiety with the staff as the

turnover of superintendents occurs (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). The feeling of starting

over and adjusting to the next educational leader does not allow for building of positive

working relationships to allow for a trusting social structure within the district (Alsbury,

2008). However, literature on the relationship between all of the district personnel and

the current or new superintendents is not obtainable. Identification and examination of

the relations and the possible effects of the trust and morale factors between personnel

and the superintendent may lead to future research. The issue of a positive environment

for personnel and superintendents, in small school districts, is a major factor due to the

close daily interaction (Chhuon, Gilkey, Gonzalez, Daly, & Chrispeel, 2008). Research

data have shown a greater accountability on superintendents as the increased expectations

are placed upon them by the school board (Trevino et al., 2008). Thus, stakeholders must allow the superintendent time to accomplish the desired outcomes and build the educational structure that will maintain success (Trevino et al., 2008). Leadership is very complex, and the essence of the relationships is the ultimate determinant in the district success and effectiveness of policies (Goenz, 2009). Long term relationships of the superintendent and staff will show the effects of leadership through outcomes, coalitions, collaborations, and motivation of staff. Moreover, as stated by Goenz (2009), short term evaluations by school boards that employ data or statistics are difficult in the short term tenure of a superintendent (Goenz, 2009).

Ownership and accountability from personnel are two factors that administrators must welcome and nurture (Laub, 2010; Somech, 2005). The method of personal participation may allow for true ownership by the faculty and staff, therefore leading to the passion created through participative practices (Hentsche, Nayfack, & Wohlsetter, 2009; Laub, 2010; Somech, 2005). Gabriel (2005) explained that the administrator must shift and rely on the powers of others instead of the powers of the system. Identifying the topic of personal relations and the possible effects of trust and morale between district personnel and the extended superintendent tenure may be strengthened through close interaction and the increased opportunities of dialogue (Hoyle et al., 2005). Thus, stakeholders should be allowed time to accomplish the desired outcomes and build the educational structure that will maintain success (Byrd et al., 2006; Cook & Johnston, 2008). Therefore, the implications for positive social change will provide school boards

and superintendents with information on the impact of frequent superintendent succession and the effects on school personnel.

Summary

The superintendent must work to create the confidence of the subordinates through sincerity and compassion (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). The superintendent must also be willing to take risks and empower personnel at all levels of the organization to promote and reinforce trust (Chhuon et al., 2008; Kochanek, 2005; Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001). Moreover, the superintendent must directly interact with personnel in order to influence the staff to focus on the district goals and work to promote the programs, use resources, and increase the district accountability (Alsbury, 2008; Cook & Johnston, 2008). Communication must be clear in order for the superintendent to develop the districts clear vision (Byrd et al., 2006; Cook & Johnston, 2008). The direct interaction and open communication may provide for positive staff trust and morale, creating constructive learning environments for student success (Alsbury, 2008). Relationships are challenged by the reality that small town boards have more influence that can work against the superintendent if the request or demands were not followed (Mountford, 2004). It was also determined that board agendas and over involvement in insignificant matters created conditions in which the superintendent decided to go to another district or retire (Byrd et al., 2006).

Many factors contribute to the increase in superintendent succession such as district accountability, school board relations, community relations, and staff relations for research to evolve to the next level of understanding, and data must be collected and used

to develop a true understanding of the factors, which may possibly create district

personnel relations, as they pertain to trust and morale toward the superintendent position

(Byrd et al., 2006). Goenz (2009) stated that leadership is very complex because the

essence of the relationships is the ultimate determination in the district success and

effectiveness of policies. Long term relationships of the superintendent and staff will

show the effects of leadership through outcomes, coalitions, collaborations, and

motivation of staff (Goenz, 2009; Hoyle et al., 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

     Section 2 provides a literature review relevant to this study. A detailed

methodology description, used in the study, will be included in Section 3. Data collection

information, data analysis, and results of the study are discussed in Section 4. A

discussion of the findings, recommendations for future research, and implications for

social change are provided in Section 5.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this correlational study was to investigate the relationship between superintendent succession rates and the level of trust and morale of school district personnel The goal of the literature review is to demonstrate what current research says about how frequent superintendent succession impacts personnel trust and morale. Many school districts are experiencing a shortage of superintendent applications in recent years. In a survey, Teegarden (2004) found that 80 million baby boomers consist of half the workforce, but less than half are going into the education fields. The reduced numbers show that succession planning, especially in leadership, is a critically important component of school districts stability. The findings illustrate that awareness for the planning of leadership succession should be a factor in the efforts to establish the stability of schools. Currently, there are few studies on succession planning for school superintendents.

Literature Search Strategy

A current literature review on the turnover rate of superintendents and the possible influence on trust and morale between personnel and superintendent resulted in limited studies pertaining to building relationships. The search included ERIC, EBSCO, ETS, SAGE, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Teacher Reference Center (EBSCO Host), Walden Dissertation databases and general internet searches in order to locate available research. Key terms used in the literature search included *superintendent turnover, superintendent succession, administration turnover, administration succession, small*

school superintendent turnover, faculty trust, faculty morale, employee trust, employee

morale, and teacher perception of superintendents. Several of the research items located

were older than 5 years, due to dearth research in superintendent succession, as it pertains

to the impact of trust and morale on all school district personnel. Research on

superintendent turnover and the impact of trust and morale on all district personnel in

small school districts was not available.

Succession Planning

According to Myers (1998), studies of superintendent succession stops at the

school board and superintendent relations level. Outside of education, most studies

prompted by similar interest in leadership turnover focused on succession planning.

Hargreaves (2009) described educational succession planning as a way to replace one

person with another, instead of a long term planning process. Step by step strategies of

succession planning in the business field have developed comprehensive plans that

address the critical change to be faced (McConnel, 1996). Although the studies are

limited in education, succession planning studies in the business field are more available.

In a study of succession, Teegarden (2004) invited 9,000 nonprofit organizations to

participate. One fourth of the surveys were returned, and of those, 44% of the

respondents answered as having an expected or unexpected succession plan for their

CEO. Huang (1999) found that less than 50% of companies across Taiwan did not have

succession plans. Based on the finding, Western society prepared more for the succession

in business than the Asian society.

The review of several hundred succession planning studies found little credible data on the common practice of succession planning (Garmin & Glawe, 2004). Their data revealed that 40% to 65% of the organizations had developed succession plans. Charon (2005) discovered a significant finding that American corporations such as McDonald's, National Broadcasting Corporation, and Colgate are more concerned with developing in house leaders than developing succession plans. Succession planning in the private sector can lessen the unnecessary turnover of personnel and reduce the need for candidate searches (Charon, 2005). This same strategy could be applied in the education field.

Superintendent Turnover

In a 2007 study, sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, Glass and Franceschini (2007) determined that the succession of 10,000 to 11,000 superintendents would be occurring across the country. The researchers also found, in a Market Data Retrieval report, that a 17% superintendent turnover rate was recorded in 2006. The superintendents who participated in the study reported that 80% of the districts do not have programs that address the replacing of the leadership positions and identification of individuals that would desire to be in the top position. A study by Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, and Ellerson (2011) found that over half of 1,829 participants did not intend to serve as a permanent superintendent within that next 5-year timeframe. In addition, a study by Sharp (2011) determined that superintendent succession was occurring due to an aging population of practicing superintendents. Although some of the studies were slightly dated, the referenced research identifies the necessity for a reduction in superintendent succession and the need for in depth research.

Succession Effects

The importance of school leadership is an underestimated position in education (Barker, 2006). According to Barker (2006), tenure has a substantial impact on school improvement. Barker also noted that although the turnover of the lead administration can be harmful and disruptive, it can lead to positive benefits such as a renewed energy. Moreover, a study by Grusky (1960) found that leadership succession can lead to a decrease in staff morale and a possible increase in conflicts, which could result in a weakening in the levels of cohesion and organizational efficiency. Studies supporting Barker concluded that the length of superintendent tenure had a significant impact on district accountability (Hoyle et al., 2005; Johnson, Huffman, Madden, & Shope, 2011; Simpson, 2013; Myers, 2011). Furthermore, positive relationships and engagement lead toward trust of the supervisor and organizational growth (Yin, Lee, Jin & Zhang, 2013). The process of developing and maintaining succession plans is not a practice of some school districts as alleged by Hall (2008). As a result, these educational agencies could experience new leadership that alters the current district procedures.

Long Term Relationships of the Superintendent and Staff

When school districts experience frequent superintendent turnover, faculty and staff do not build the relationships that foster positive trust or morale with the superintendent (Alsbury, 2008; Fullan, 2005). The integrity of a superintendent is a key factor in developing relationships and building a working rapport (Hoyle et al., 2005; Talbert & Beach, 2013). Hoyle et al. (2005) asserted that district personnel will follow and trust leaders who have earned their trust through past actions. Positive participation

with faculty creates a positive association in the school climate (McFarlane, 2010;

Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). School administrators must show dedication by

honoring promises and develop a positive effect on morale (Brown & Roloff, 2011).

Additionally, Williams and Hatch (2012) stated that superintendents require a significant

amount of time in order to create a positive culture. As the school board and

superintendent develop district goals, a timeframe to implement and benchmark the goals

is required (William & Hatch, 2012). Leadership is complex because the essence of

relationships is the ultimate determination in the district success and effectiveness of

policies (Goenz, 2009; Hilliard & Newsome, 2013). Goenz (2009) also noted that long

term relationships between the superintendent and staff will demonstrate the effects of

leadership through outcomes, coalitions, collaborations, and motivation of staff. Skaalvik

and Skaalvik (2010) supported Goenz by concluding that relations with school

leadership, through the feeling of belonging, will lead to job satisfaction. Goenz further

noted that short term evaluations by school boards using data are challenging in the short

term tenure of a superintendent. The superintendent should be able to present multiple

year data during the current administration if a true evaluation related to student

outcomes is to be used by the board of trustees to allow the superintendent to demonstrate

effectiveness and assist in controlling opinion with facts (Goenz, 2009). Long term

relationships between teachers and administrators can move the instructional practices

from crisis management to instructional leadership, and school boards should allow time

for the superintendent and staff to develop relationships before they use state or federal

accountability ratings to determine the effectiveness of the districts' progress (Bredeson,

Klar, & Johannson, 2011; Zelman & Cross, 2008). Handford and Leithwood (2013)

determined that school leaders need to concentrate on trust-building practices that address

improvement of educational practices.

The importance of a new superintendent developing authentic relationships of

trust is a key factor in developing personnel morale and student success (Brooking,

2008). Brown and Roloff (2011) concluded that the development of a strong relationship

will increase organizational trust. All district stakeholders, faculty, staff, students,

parents, and support organizations require a sense of ownership so that the specific vision

can be created, and all individuals understand the demands and expectations that will be

concentrated on by the superintendent (Johnson, 2011; Scheopner, 2010). Gabriel (2005)

explained that the superintendent must shift from relying on the power of the system to

seeking the powers of others. The feeling of belonging by employees can be improved

through the social relations with supervisors (Moe, Pazzaglia, & Ronconi, 2010).

Moreover, Marzano (2005) stated that a community of relationships needs to be created

by the superintendent, providing relevant information and training so that all stakeholders

are able to make good decisions that are goal oriented. Praise and public

acknowledgement both confirm and affirm the needed recognition that will reduce the

uncertainty of the tenured staff who remain in the district and continue to work through

the administrative turnover. A positive environment with stakeholders is the result of the

superintendent establishing respect and instilling faith in the staff with actions of

openness, honesty, and integrity. Knowing the concerns of the subordinates, the

superintendent can work to create the conditions that motivate employees to function at

the highest level. Employees who are given the feeling of empowerment in return exhibit

trust (Eberl, Clement, & Möller, 2012). Organizational commitment promoted by the

management is positively associated with trust and therefore worth fostering (Chingos,

Whitehurst, & Lindquist, 2014; Timming, 2012). The superintendent should work as the

"servant" who is positioned at the center of the organization in order to address and

reduce the lack of trust. Development of the needed trust from the stakeholders to the

superintendent will permit the building of an increased system of understood

accountability and allow for progress of the local goals in the system (Marzano, 2005 p.

17).

Administrative Well-Being

The stresses for the school leader, due to the challenges of the current

accountability, can become overpowering and may result in negative outcomes. Boyland

(2013) found that principal participants showed less interest in the superintendency,

rating it as the most stressful of demographic peer groups. Although some stressful

challenges can be constructive, a person has to be able to transform the pressure into a

positive outcome (Gerlitz, 2004). Gerlitz (2004) stated that if a person becomes

overwhelmed, the distress will lead to health problems for the individual. In a report by

the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2000), leadership is challenged

with the ever changing dynamics of the school system. Outside factors such as the

unpredictability of funding, adjusting to the needs of increasingly diverse student

populations, the implementation of increased curriculum standards, and integrating social

programs that were once implemented in the community can lead to termination if the goals and expectations are not achieved.

The factors that lead to stress for school professionals are increased workload and insufficient time to successfully complete the extra demands of accountability placed on them (Stricherz, 2001). Stricherz (2001) also noted that the lack of professional development and insufficient funding increased the probability of professional burnout and the increased levels of stress. Cooper, Fusarelli, and Carella (2000) stated that in a previous 10-year time period leading up to their study, the stress on school leaders has increased, while the attraction to the position has decreased. In the study, 51% of 2,262 school superintendents reported that they felt a high or considerable stress. The study showed that although the school leaders' stress appeared to be very real, it did not decrease the enthusiasm that the administrators felt about their positions. The administrators felt a "considerable" fulfillment was at 56% and "moderate" fulfillment at 34%, in their current positions. Although it was down by 5% from a 1992 survey, it was still considerably favorable, with the high stress levels (Cooper et al., 2000).

Pierce (2000) performed a 10-year study to determine how school leaders felt about their jobs. The purpose of Pierce's study was to determine if the job was worth the stress and if school leaders would choose the same position, if given the opportunity. The results of the study showed that 52% of school leaders would "certainly" accept the same job and 33% would "probably" accept the same job. Of the leaders who did not find their job favorable, 13% reported that they "probably would not" accept the same job and 2% indicated that they "would not" accept the same position.

A study by Kowalski et al. (2010) determined that a driven personality was the most dominant characteristic of school leaders. When related to the stress of school leadership positions, internal drive leads to a professional desiring to accept the responsibilities. Professionals with a driven personality type are motivated to set and achieve goals. Laub (2010) explained these stressors as making the difficult decisions that will best serve the students. The educational leaders cannot be afraid of losing their jobs in order to create the best educational environment. Successful execution assists in creating the positive school environments within schools (Alsbury, 2008; Byrd et al., 2006; Clayton & Johnson, 2011).

According to Leithwood and Reihl (2003), several factors affect the stresses that are leading to the turbulence in schools and beyond the control of the single administrator. These factors include (a) increased staff absenteeism, (b) teacher strife, and (c) federal accountability mandates. Leithwood and Reihl suggested including staff in decision making may be helpful. The staff members used will be determined by the situation. Regardless of the conflict, the overall goal will be to create a positive change through cooperative participation and clear communication of the situation and the strategies that will be used. They also explained that this will reduce the stress on the administrator and raise morale in the school. Ho (2010) supported Leithwood and Reihl by stating that teachers will have a higher morale and greater job satisfaction with higher participation in the decision making process.

Leadership Strategies and Theories

A district superintendent interacts with all levels of employees that require the use of different leadership styles depending on the need and situation. Forming groups or committees to address identified criteria could allow the superintendent to create the environment of empowerment for each participant in a district with limited internal and external resources (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003). The use of such a team would also allow the superintendent to be just one voice in the group and reveal a level of confidence that permits others to exhibit qualities of professionalism and expertise (Firestone, 2009; Somech, 2005). The description of an administrator as a teacher advanced one step because decisions, initiative, and skill in working with people is an idea that relates to the participative and transformational leadership theories that require the buy in and unification of the stakeholders to reach a given vision. Tser-Yieth, Shiuh-Nan, and York (2012) determined that follower trust was indirectly affected by the leader's devotion to the completion of a task. Leading through openness and accountability creates the trust level earned by the superintendent (Firestone, 2009). The theory does not limit the leadership style that an administrator feels is necessary but focuses on working toward a positive environment and outcome (Firestone, 2009). Opposition to the administrator's ideas would be welcomed in order not to dominate and show a level of professional receptiveness (Chen, Hwang, & Liu, 2012). Being one voice in the formed team is supported by Somech's (2005) description of the participative practice of leadership, whereby empowerment would lead to the attainment of the given goal or vision.

Level 5 leader categories that concentrate on abilities to construct relationship building opportunities in order to establish commitment from personnel supports the participative and transformational theories (Collins, 2001, p. 234). According to Collins (2001), Level 5 leaders face difficult situations and prevail because the outcome of all stakeholders is placed before personal ambitions. An action such as looking at one's self before blaming others creates high standards for a culture of discipline. Personal humility combined with intense personal will builds the loyalty and high standards that assist in the achieving of the organizations goals (Collins, 2001). By the superintendent establishing his or herself as one in the team and not having the dominating role in a task, a position of vulnerability is exposed and thus can allow leadership qualities in other participants to come forth. In essence, the position of trust can develop toward the superintendent and expand the level of commitment toward the leader (Collins, 2001). This type of leadership is described as "principle-centered power" (p. 102). The leader is trusted and respected; therefore, the personnel believe in the leaders cause and want to do what the leader requests (Covey, 1992).

Accountability Through Leadership

Administrative leadership is a term that may bring several different answers to educators (Johnson, 2011). Different leadership styles are instructional, participative, democratic, transformational, moral, and strategic (Johnson, 2011). The focus is that the campus or district leadership ensures that all facets of the organization are functioning. An administrator's role is part of a web that includes environmental, personal, and in-school relationships that influence organizational outcomes with the result of student

success (Johnstone, Dikkers, & Luedeke, 2009). The superintendent is also a political

leader who navigates through the interest of multiple stakeholders to achieve a level of

approval to promote programs and use resources. The curriculum and educational growth

of a district should develop in a longitudinal direction that creates optimal learning

environments and a dependable faculty and staff support system; hence, staff with

positive morale. These gains are the results of a common and consistent vision directed

from the leadership (Louis & Robinson, 2012). These factors require longevity in the

leadership role (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). Without longevity, the perception of a

district with low morale, loss of organizational direction and vision, and a general attitude

of starting over again develops from frequent superintendent turnover (Grissom &

Anderson, 2012).

An effective superintendent identifies and capitalizes on the leadership qualities

of others in the system and promotes common goals (Gabriel, 2005; Hoyle et al., 2005;

Willis & Varner, 2010). The communication skills of the superintendent at the personal

and relationship level with the board of trustees will assist in creating the appropriate

district goals. These goals would be based on state and federal accountability, as well as

the identified recommendations created by the site-based team. The established goals

have to communicate the vision, to the district personnel, in a manner that will build

support and develop the common vision that creates the productive environment for the

learning success of the students (Gabriel, 2005). A superintendent must oversee the

instructional capacity of the entire school system and there must be high levels of

involvement. The superintendent should influence principals and teachers to become

more directly involved in classroom teaching and student learning. Empowering the

district personnel to be a part of the accountability process will increase their willingness

to follow the direction of the superintendent and improve the ability of each stakeholder

to achieve success in a vision oriented direction (Hoyle et al., 2005). The superintendent

must develop a leadership role as an influential instructional leader, accepting the

ultimate responsibility for improving the district accountability ratings, and take the risks

to create necessary changes. The superintendent must also be the political leader

navigating through the interest of multiple stakeholders to achieve a level of approval in

order to promote programs and use resources. By the superintendent accepting the

responsibility of all accountability the personnel can be lead to accept personal

accountability required for each position (Grissom & Anderson, 2012).

Creating the Accountability Environment

Using the strategy of allowing others to engage in problem solving and relying on

their expertise of a particular issue, may promote the mindfulness that reinforces the

improvement of morale. The issue at hand should not segregate any party from problem

solving, regardless of the level of expertise or tenure in the district. The given opportunity

will allow the superintendent to display a willingness to be open to problem solving as a

team. Repeated social interaction and involving individuals in easy, low risk activities is

potentially more important for building trust (Murdoch, 2012). This allows for engaged

involvement and retains the levels of authority within a system (Firestone, 2009). Trust in

other parts of an organization requires the will to be vulnerable based on the faith that

sincerity will cultivate compassion, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. Each

component is as important as the next, due to the situations and strategies requiring the superintendent to choose the necessary approach to the environmental condition (Firestone, 2009). Organizational trust arises from employees' expectations, perceptions and the intentions of the individual leader or organization (Searle & Dietz, 2012).Trust must allow for an anticipated level of risk and show willingness from each individual to be openly involved in the relationship. In addition, the level of the risk does not have to be significant; nonetheless each individual must understand that there is something at stake in the process of identifying and addressing the situation or issue (Chhuon et al., 2008; Huang, Iun, Liu, & Gong, 2010).

The hypothesized belief of trust building through opportunity would allow superintendents in small districts to improve morale in a short time frame (Chhuon et al., 2008). It is important to decide which components of trust are most important in building the district trust relationships and involve subordinates in shared decision making and clearly focus on the opinions, feelings, and decisions (Gabriel, 2005; Hoyle et al., 2005; Johnstone et al., 2009). The superintendent should focus on the process of involvement more than the solutions that arise from the process (Chhuon et al., 2008). Openly admitting errors rather than hiding mistakes is essential (Somech, 2005). Focusing on mistakes allows for learning opportunities to discuss the situation and engage in problem solving rather than pointing out fault in the incident or individuals (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006). Superintendents who are open to correction demonstrate the characteristic of willfully assessing oneself in order to move forward (Somech, 2005). Allowing for shared opinions and corrections permit the superintendent to increase the success of

district responsibilities and nurture the development of the district structure that assist in the superintendent responsibilities. District staff will observe the example, and in turn, should be open to corrective measures in order to improve professionally (Chhuon, et al., 2008; Nolan & Stitzlen, 2011).

The actions and outcomes of the faculty and staff are an indirect result of the superintendent's leadership (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Goenz, 2009). Nolan and Stitzlein (2011) concluded that in order to cultivate high morale, educators require support and tools from the leadership. Leadership is very complex because the essence of relationships is the ultimate determination in the district success and effectiveness of policies (Hoy &Tarter, 2011). Employees believe that their needs, interest and issues should be taken care of and resolved (Krot & Lewicka, 2012). Long term relationships of the superintendent with staff will demonstrate the effects of leadership through outcomes, coalitions, collaborations, and motivation of staff (Hoy & Tarter, 2011). Positive outcomes will allow the superintendent to prove effectiveness and assist in controlling opinion with facts. The superintendent, in turn, should seek opportunities for building trust with the staff and create positive results from the identified needs (Goenz, 2009). The strategy of using opportunities, such as creating a grant writing team, to build support and trust from subordinates is supported by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty's (2005) five-step plan for effective school leadership. The steps include (a) developing a strong school leadership team, (b) distributing responsibilities throughout the leadership team, (c) selecting the right work, (d) identifying the order of magnitude implied by the selected work, and (e) matching the management style to the order of magnitude of the

change initiative. In creating the leadership team, the superintendent has a coordinated plan to develop a district wide strategy that would build a unified goal. Each person would be responsible to collect data and develop ideas to address the needs in their campus or area of professional assignment. The team would then narrow down the collected data to develop a succinct plan for writing the grant and addressing required obligations. All members of the team, although subordinate to the superintendent, would create roles and responsibilities for the entire grant writing process, and in turn grow in the discipline of teamwork and develop trust through participative leadership (Chhuon et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2010).

In a study of 120 teacher teams, Somech (2005) found that participative leadership strategies lead to empowerment of the groups and, in turn, created teams that were willing to work in expanded thought processes. These teams showed the willingness and courage to engage in more innovative practices in curriculum decision making and the methods of instructional presentation. Somech (2005) also determined that participative leadership strategies did not cause the administration to act as mediators, but as the motivational catalyst that indirectly empowered the teachers to be directly involved in the decision making process. The result of the participative strategy was the strengthening of the teachers' beliefs in their own effectiveness and the willingness to think "outside –the –box" (pg.792). Participative and transformational leadership by the superintendent using a grant writing team, , could support the development of personnel empowerment, improve opinions toward the superintendent, and build a common vision for the district. Somech was supported by Huang et al., (2010) as they concluded that

participative leadership strongly correlated with personnel developing an empowered and trusting relationship with the supervisor. Hallinger and Heck (2010) also found that improving schools used forms of collaborative leadership.

Creating Direction Through the District Vision

Primarily, the role of the superintendent leadership is to oversee and maintain the functionality of a district. Curriculum and educational growth should develop in a longitudinal direction that creates optimal learning environments and a dependable faculty and staff support system. These gains are the results of a common and consistent vision directed from the superintendent (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). The perception of a district with low morale, loss of organizational direction and vision, and the general attitude of starting over again develops from frequent superintendent turnover (Yee & Cuban, 1996). As tenure of school superintendents' decrease, the reality that a continuous educational vision in districts will be difficult to maintain. Administrative changes, at the district level, lead to inconsistent leadership practices. The result of such changes, end in personnel that lose faith in the leadership and develop morale of distrust. The new superintendent must understand the identified position of the district and express the required actions required, in order to develop an immediate amount of acceptance and trust (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). In problem six of Covey's (1992) "seven chronic problems of leadership" (pp.170-171), he stated that people will not follow a closed management style. Exclusion from problem solving, closed communication, and little teamwork creates low morale and low trust. Covey also stated that low trust breaks down

the levels of communication. Without the buy in from personnel, the district vision will not develop the desired trust factor toward the superintendent.

Summary

The superintendent is the executive officer that oversees the daily functions of a school district. Superintendent turnover in school districts of a large southern state can play a significant role in district accountability (Trevino et al., 2008). The factors that have led to superintendent turnover range from district performance on assessment testing to the politics between the board and superintendent. Small districts tend to have a higher percentage of superintendent turnover because of the more direct interaction between staff, superintendent, and school board members (Alsbury, 2008). Hence, the need to establish a better understanding of the effects of the superintendent turnover on staff morale and trust in the position or person may require more research. In order for research to evolve to the next level of understanding as it pertains to trust of the position or person, subordinate and superintendent data must be collected and used to develop an understanding of the factors that may possibly create a rift in district relations. The quality characteristics of a superintendent must work to create the confidence of the subordinates cultivated by sincerity and compassion on the part of the superintendent. The superintendent must be willing to take risk and empower personnel at all levels of the district hierarchy to promote and reinforce trust. The superintendent must directly interact in order to influence the staff to focus on the district goals and work to promote the programs, use resources, and increase the district accountability. Communication must be clear, in order for the superintendent to develop a clear vision for the district.

Direct interaction and open communication will facilitate positive staff morale and create

constructive learning environments for student success (Farmer, 2009).

Section 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this correlation study was to examine school district personnels'

perceptions of the level of trust and morale in the school districts of a large southern

state. Of particular interest was the relationship of the frequent succession of

superintendents of small school districts, with 429 or less high school students, on the

level of trust and morale of school district personnel. The succession rate of

superintendents covered a 6-year period between 2005 and 2011. The target population of

this study was small school districts that may have experienced multiple superintendent

changes between 2005 and 2011. The variables were measured using two survey

instruments. One instrument was used to request district superintendent participation in

order to identify which school districts would be included in the study. The second

instrument was used to measure district personnels' level of trust and morale. Statistical

analyses were performed to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions.

In Section 3, I provide a discussion of the research design selected for this study.

The research questions and hypotheses, the setting, the population and sample,

instrumentation and materials, data collection, data analysis process, ethical

considerations, and the role of the researchers are discussed.

Research Design and Design Appropriateness

A quantitative correlational research design was deemed appropriate for the study

because the focus of the study was to identify if there was a statistically significant

relationship between the superintendent succession rate and the level of trust and morale

of district personnel. This study did not aim to manipulate variables with an intervention or experiment but intended to study an existing phenomenon and determine its characteristics (Cozby, 2009). Moreover, the study was focused on identifying relationships between variables rather than investigating cause and effect relationships between variables.

A quantitative design was appropriate for this study. Quantitative methodology requires a more analytical approach to the analysis than qualitative, allowing the researcher to objectively measure objects and facts independent of context (Babbie, 2012). A qualitative study seeks to explore a central phenomenon by understanding deep views and themes by observations (Marshall & Rossman, 2008). A qualitative research design is used to assess different research interests, where information is gathered regarding the experiences of the participants and their perceptions (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell (2009), the qualitative researcher is interested in addressing the how and why questions related to the research. A qualitative research study would not have been appropriate because the objective of this study was not to describe the lived experiences of district personnel. Further, the results of qualitative research would be broad and general by providing themes based upon subjective data (Merriam, 2009).

Quantitative research explores relationships between variables and is conducted to reveal a relationship (Creswell, 2009). In quantitative research, the variables are known and defined, whereas in qualitative research, the aim is to identify and define variables (Bryman, 2012). To determine the relationship between the identified variables in quantitative research requires measurement (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In quantitative

research, the conclusions are based on statistical analyses of the data to decrease the degree of the researcher's biases and thoughts (Babbie, 2012). As opposed to a qualitative study, which lacks specificity, a quantitative study is focused on illustrating various relationships amongst variables (Creswell, 2009).

Survey research is defined as a form of social research in which one systematically asks many people the same questions, then records and analyzes their answers (Cozby, 2009). Two survey instruments were used, a superintendent survey and district personnel survey. The intent of the superintendent survey was to identify which school districts would qualify for this study, since superintendent succession rates are not readily available. The district personnel survey was used to measure levels of trust and morale in the school districts identified by the superintendents.

I gathered data for this study from superintendents and district personnel of small school districts in a large southern state. Small school districts were defined as having a high school population of 429 or less. All small school districts that were given superintendent permission to participate were included in the study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The overarching research question for this study asked the following question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and the levels of trust and morale among district personnel? The research focused on two specific questions and their hypotheses:

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1. What correlation does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel trust?

H_{o1}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

H_{a1}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

Research Question 2. What correlation does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel morale?

H_{o2}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and the level of morale among school district personnel.

H_{a2}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and the level of morale among school district personnel.

Population and Sampling Frame

The target population for this study was district personnel working in small school districts in a large southern state who may have experienced one or more superintendent changes between the years of 2005 and 2011. For this study, the large southern state school districts were classified as 1A or 2A in size, meaning that they had a high school

population of 429 or less. Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data were

collected from the state education agency website in order to determine the small school

districts that met the criteria of 429 high school students or less. At the time of the study,

512 school districts were identified to participate in the study (Texas Education Agency,

2013).

The targeted population for this study was all school personnel, from small school

districts in the southern state. The school personnel fell under several categories: (a)

support services (nurse, food services, aide, secretary), (b) physical plant (maintenance,

transportation, custodial, grounds), (c) campus administration (principal, assistant

principal), (d) campus faculty (counselor, teacher), and (e) central office (assistant

superintendent, business manager, PEIMS/payroll clerk, secretary; (Texas Education

Agency, 2013).

This study used convenience sampling to select participants. Convenience

sampling is a nonprobability sampling where the participants are selected according to

their availability, accessibility, and proximity to the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

I used convenience sampling because of my ability to acquire more participants in a

shorter period of time (Cozby, 2001).

Sample Size

To determine an appropriate sample size for this study, three factors were taken

into consideration: (a) the power of the test, (b) the effect size, and (c) the level of

significance (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The power of the correlation test

measured the probability of rejecting a false null hypothesis using a correlation analysis

(Geoff, 2010). The effect size, measured the strength of the relationship between the variables in the study (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Allen, 2003). The level of significance or the alpha level is the probability of a Type I error or the probability of rejecting a null hypothesis that is true. The alpha level is usually defined as being equal to 5% (Cozby, 2009).

For this study, a power of 95% was determined to allow me to reject a false null hypothesis. A power of 95% ensured that the statistical analyses would provide valid conclusions with regards to the total population (Creswell, 2009). This provides 95% strength in terms of assessing the validity of the statistical tests that were conducted (Cozby, 2009). A moderate effect size of 0.30 was selected to provide evidence of a relationship between variables without being too strict or lenient (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008). The level of significance or alpha level used was 5%. The sample size also depended on the type of analysis conducted. The use of a two-tailed correlation analysis assumed that there could be a positive or a negative relationship between the variables (Cohen, 1988). The sample size was calculated using G*Power, a computer program designed to calculate sample sizes for a wide variety of statistical methods. The minimum sample size for the study was found to be 134 participants (Appendix F). The collected sample was less than the projected 134 participants required, thereby decreasing the validity and the generalizability of the findings (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008). It was anticipated that 20% of responses would either be incomplete or invalid (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2008). Therefore, the target number of participants was 168.and the actual number of respondents was 102.

Instrumentation and Materials

The study used two self-designed survey instruments to conduct the research. The first instrument, School District Superintendent Survey, was used to gather demographic information from superintendents. The objective was to identify small school districts so that they could be invited to participate in the study. The second instrument was the School District Personnel Survey, which measured the levels of trust and morale of district personnel. Demographic data was collected in both surveys.

School District Superintendent Survey

The school district superintendent survey (Appendix A) is comprised of three parts: (a) demographics, (b) personnel interaction, and (c) trust and morale. The demographic section began with the first three questions asking the size of high school population, size of the current district according to the University Interscholastic League (1A or 2A), and the number of superintendents who had served the district between 2005 to 2011, including the superintendent respondent. The latter part of the demographic section asked for the number of personnel in the district as well as the general work history of the superintendent respondent. Part 2 of the superintendent survey contained five questions to gather data on the frequency of the superintendent participant's interactions with district personnel. The demographic and the interaction frequency data were used as covariates in the statistical analyses. Part 3 of the superintendent survey included questions on trust and morale. Two questions that asked the superintendent respondent to rate the level of trust and the level of morale of district personnel, high, neutral, or low, and two questions asked the superintendent participant to attribute the

level of trust and the level of morale by selecting any of the eight listed factors that applied to the personnel.

School District Personnel Survey

The school district personnel survey (Appendix D) was a self-designed survey and was separated into three sections, namely the demographic section, the personal interactions section, and the trust and morale section. The survey was used to gather demographic information about participants. The demographic information included participant gender, current position, and promotions during 2005 to 2011, as well as which education center serves their district. Responses to demographic questions were used as covariates in the statistical analyses. Question 2 was used to filter out district personnel not targeted for the study, such as those that had not worked in their current school district between 2005 and 2011.

Personnel Interaction

Section 2 of the survey was comprised of six questions asking participants about the frequency of personal interactions with current or part superintendents. The response to each question was presented as the number of interactions per week. The responses to the six questions were summed into a total interaction figure and used as a covariate in the statistical analyses.

Trust and Morale

Section 3 of the survey was comprised of 14 questions asking about participants' perceptions of the levels trust and morale in their school district. The survey contained seven questions that asked about morale and seven questions that asked about trust.

Section 3 contained the employee variables used in the statistical analysis to determine if

the frequent superintendent turnover had an impact on the trust and morale factors.

Question 31 measured the level of trust in the superintendent position. Question 32

measured the level of morale in the personnel. The participants were asked to respond

using a five-point Likert Scale (*Low, Somewhat Low, Neutral, Somewhat High,* and *High*)

(de Winter, 2010; Norman, 2012).

Survey Response Statements

Questions 13 to 18 were answered with time duration based on a four point

coding scale. Answers with a *0-1 times per week* were given a code of one; *2-4 times per*

week were given a code of two; and *5-7 times per week* were given a code of three; and *8*

or more times per week were given a code of four. These responses were summed to

arrive at a figure for total interactions with the superintendent in a week. Questions 31

and 32 were answered *low, somewhat low, neutral, somewhat high,* and *high* on a 5-point

coding scale. *My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers*

between 2005-2011 responses were coded as blank, hence excluded from the averaging.

Low answers were given a code of one; *somewhat low* answers were given a code of two;

neutral answers were given a code of three; *somewhat high* were given a code of four;

and *high* were given a code of five. These responses were scored, but used to code the

answers from each participant and subgroup in order to plot and determine if any linear

relationships occurred.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of an instrument concerns whether the operationalized measure of a

variable correctly represents what it is supposed to represent or the soundness and

effectiveness of the measuring instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Validity is normally

construed as having both an internal and external dimension (Creswell, 2009). In survey

research, the validity of results is heavily affected by the characteristics of the data-

gathering techniques and instruments employed to measure study variables (Gravetter &

Wallnau, 2008; Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2008).

There are two measures of validity: internal validity and external validity. Leedy

and Ormrod (2010) reported that internal validity denotes the extent to which the design

of a study enables a researcher to make precise inferences about any potential causal

relationship and other relationships established in the data. Creswell (2009) described

threats to internal validity as "experimental procedures, treatments, or experiences of the

participants that threaten the researcher's ability to draw correct inferences from the data

in an experiment" (p. 171). An example of an internal validity threat in this study was

communication between participants that could influence how the individuals answer the

survey (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2008). In this research design, a participant who had

previously completed the survey could discuss the answers with a future participant and

influence answers toward the morale and trust levels. Both survey instruments were self-

designed questionnaires that were adjudged by an independent doctor of education in

order to ensure validity. Statistical tests were used to answer the research questions.

Consequently, the opinion of personnel could be influenced by previous participants.

In an attempt to reduce the sharing of survey answers, a statement was placed at

the beginning and at the end of the personnel survey, requesting that survey participants

not discuss their survey responses with others. Also, due to the fact that the electronic

survey was sent to all personnel, an employee would possibly not meet the criteria to

qualify for participation, employed in the district least two or more years between the

years of 2005 and 2011, and complete the survey. Such a participant would skew the data

analysis. Hence, question two of the personnel survey asked if the participant had worked

in the current district between the years of 2005 and 2011. Question two allowed for the

disqualification of ineligible participants. Also, the duration of time that the current

superintendent had been employed at the district would possibly not allow for an opinion

on the district personnel levels of trust and morale. There was no way to control the

amount of time that the current superintendent had been employed in the district.

The external validity of a research project refers to the ability of the researcher to

generalize the study's findings from a specific setting and specific group to a broad range

of settings and individuals (Creswell, 2010). Thus, findings from a study that has high

external validity can be generalized to many situations and many groups of individuals,

while the findings of a study with low external validity may apply to only very specific

settings and populations (Creswell, 2010). Briggs (2008) stated that external validity is

necessary for generalizing the setting and forming a causal conclusion. Creswell (2009)

stated that a threat to external validity may occur when incorrect inferences are drawn

from the research sample data and then related to other groups not included in the study.

Yu and Ohlund (2010) inferred that external validity seeks to determine if similar results

can be observed in other studies. Because this study limited the participation to 1A and

2A school districts, the findings did not attempt to generalize the results to larger school

districts. Thus, the possibility of positive relationships between frequent superintendent turnover and the impact on school district personnel levels of trust and morale attempted to identify a possible cause-and-effect relationship and recommend more in depth research. Validity was tested by asking participants to examine the whole survey for overall comprehension, clarity, perceived ambiguity, and potential difficulty in responding.

Reliability i**s** the consistency is when an instrument yields a certain outcome when the item being measured has not changed (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Punch, 2013). Gravetter and Wallnau (2008) recommend correlations as a measurement to determine relationships between two sets of data. This study attempted to provide education leaders with definitive conclusions regarding the relationship between superintendent succession rates and the level of trust and morale of district personnel. Understanding the themes can further assist the leadership in focusing efforts; however this study examined surface relationships but did not probe the underlying causal reasons (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Bryman (2012) states that the "quantitative researcher is likely to be concerned with the question of whether a measure is stable or not" (p. 46) (Creswell, 2009).

The study used a correlational research design which allowed for the determination of the direct influence between the variables by studying the linear relationship between the variables (Creswell, 2009). Reliability can be measured through instruments such as test-retest, alternate-form, intraobserver, interobserver, and internal consistency (The Institute for Statistical Education, 2014).The objective measure used

survey instruments to ensure that the variables used in this research study were not influenced by the biases from the researcher. Punch (2013) asserts that "internal consistently reliability estimation requires only one administration of the instrument" (p. 95). This study requested that each participant complete the survey once and not to share the survey questions with other possible participants. Internal consistency reliability was tested by asking participants to examine the whole questionnaire for overall comprehension, clarity, perceived ambiguity, and potential difficulty in responding (The Institute for Statistical Education, 2014).

Data Collection

Data for this study was gathered from two surveys, the superintendent survey (Appendix B) and to the district personnel survey (Appendix D). Survey Monkey, an online survey tool to was used to gather data. Survey Monkey allows users to collect and analyze data from electronic surveys and has been serving customers since 1999 (Survey Monkey, 2012). Survey Monkey is the Internet-based survey tool used by 80% of the Fortune 500 companies (Survey Monkey, 2012). Survey Monkey offers efficient data gathering, secure and restricted access to data, and convenient data extraction in Excel for data analysis (Survey Monkey, 2012). All completed surveys of participants were used as data for this study.

Initial data collection took place using the free public access information of the state education agency web site to identify the total number of state school districts that have 429 or less high school students categorized as 1A to 2A districts (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The Survey Monkey link to the superintendent survey (Appendix B) and

to the district personnel survey (Appendix D) was sent electronically to Executive

Directors of each of the 20 regional Education Service Centers with an introductory e-

mail (Appendix E), describing the purpose of the study. The e-mail requested that the

superintendent survey participation be forwarded from the Executive Directors once

permission was granted. I requested that the superintendent request and consent letter be

electronically forwarded to the superintendents of each school district in the Executive

Director's education region.

The superintendent e-mail request included a survey invitation to the qualifying

district superintendents asking for their participation in the study and permission to

conduct the study in their district. The survey invitation was sent electronically to

potential participants. The group e-mails hid the e-mail addresses of prospective

participants to ensure security and confidentiality. The survey link led the participant to

the Informed Consent form (Appendix A) before proceeding to the question items. The

consent form explained that utmost care would be taken to maintain confidentiality and

anonymity of responses. The survey remained open for approximately two weeks.

Completion of the survey by superintendents served as consent to participate in the study

on behalf of their district. The superintendent thereby granted permission for me to

conduct the study with district personnel to measure their level of trust and morale. To

ensure confidentiality, all responses were collected using an online survey tool called

Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey uses random identification numbers for participants to

ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The total of number of participating districts was

established based upon the superintendents response to questions 1 to 3 of the

superintendent survey which asked about the size of the high school population (which should be 429 or less), the size of the current district (either 1A or 2A), and the number of superintendents that had served in the district from 2005 to 2011 (which should be 0, 1, 2, 3 or more).

Superintendents from qualifying districts were asked to forward the survey to personnel in their district to request their participation in the study. Also, due to the fact that there was no collected state data pertaining to cumulative superintendent turnover per district, the general e-mail was sent to the to all district superintendents. This strategy relied on each small school superintendent to self-identify their district's eligibility to participate in the study and present superintendent turnover data within the given 6-year period to determine if the district qualified for the research study. The informed consent form was used to ensure that potential participants agreed to voluntarily participate in the study prior to proceeding to the survey questionnaire. The consent form explained that utmost care would be taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of responses. The survey remained opened for two weeks. Employees that had worked in their current districts between the years 2005 and 2011 were asked to participate. The exact number of the participants could not be determined, due to the variance in employee numbers per district and the procedure of survey disbursement throughout the state.

The responses were gathered in a password-protected account in Survey Monkey for download into Excel at the close of the survey. The data were saved on an external flash drive, which was encrypted with a security password only known to me. The flash

drive is stored in a security-enabled lockbox belonging to me and will be retained for 5 years.

Data Analysis

At the close of the survey the raw data was downloaded from Survey Monkey and exported into an Excel spreadsheet and imported into SPSS for statistical analysis. The hypotheses of this study were analyzed using the Spearman's rho correlation. The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was appropriate for this study because the focus was to determine how two variables are related with one another (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008). The objective of this study was to determine the relationships between the variable of superintendent succession rate and the employee variables of the levels of trust and morale of district personnel. Norman (2010) stated that "parametric statistics can be used with Likert data, with small samples, with unequal variances, and with non-normal distributions, with no fear of coming to the wrong conclusion" (p. 631).

In line with the purpose of the study, the Spearman's rho correlation was used to analyze the data obtained from this study to determine if there was a relationship between the superintendent variable, superintendent succession rate, and the employee variables, levels of trust and morale of district personnel (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008). "Spearman correlation is used to measure the relationship between x and y when both variables are measured on an ordinal scale" (p. 440). The ordinal scale ranks the measurements and allows for the determination of difference between two variables. The Spearman

correlation assists in determining a one directional relationship, rather than a linear

relationship (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008).

For the frequency distributions, the number and percentage of each occurrence

were presented for the categorical or dichotomous variables in the study. In particular,

frequency and percentages were used to describe the sampled participants according to

their demographic characteristics (such as gender, current position, education service

center, and years of work experience in current district). The Survey Monkey data

frequency distribution and measures of central tendency are presented in a tabular form in

Chapter 4.

Ethical Considerations

Protective measures were taken to protect the rights of participants in this study.

Approval to perform the research study was granted through the Walden University

Research Review (URR) process and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application

was approved and assigned the #02-28-13-0137478. The survey link led participants to

the voluntary and informed consent form before proceeding to the survey question items

in both the superintendent survey and the district personnel survey. Each respondent was

required to respond to the voluntary and informed consent form before proceeding to the

question items. In doing so, the participant provided consent to participate in the study.

The participants were made aware that all information gathered from the survey for use in

this study would be completely confidential and that participation in study was voluntary.

The informed consent form (Appendix A-Superintendent Consent, Appendix C-

Personnel Consent) articulated the procedural steps taken by me to maintain privacy,

confidentiality, and the non-attribution of individual responses. The form stated that each

participant's background information would remain confidential and would not be

released without prior expressed personal approval.

Restricted access protects and secures participant information to maintain

confidentiality, anonymity, and to ensure that all responses are secure from inappropriate

disclosure to enhance reliability and validity of provided data. I reassured the

superintendents that chose to participate in the study that all data would not contain

names of participants to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. I followed all the

necessary procedures to guarantee the safekeeping of all data collected. The data

collected was available only to me, in order to maintain security and confidentiality. Data

was stored in electronic format on a secured external hard drive and/or in paper format in

a locked file cabinet. Data from this study will be retained for a period of five years after

completion of the study and will then be destroyed through permanent deletion of the

files. Any paper-based information will shredded.

Summary

Section 3 provided a detailed description of the methodology that was used in this

study. This study sought to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship

between the frequent succession of superintendents in small school districts and the level

of trust and morale of district personnel. A correlation research design to measure the

variables of superintendent turnover and the impact on personnel morale and trust was

employed for this study. The target population for this study was district personnel

working in small school districts with high school populations of 429 or less that may

have experienced multiple superintendent changes between the years of 2005-2011. Convenience sampling was used select participants for this study and to maximize the number of respondents.

This study used two self-designed survey instruments to gather data. The first survey was sent to superintendents, with an attached Survey Monkey link to be sent out to district personnel, upon superintendent approval for district participation. The superintendent survey was intended to identify small school districts, so that they could be invited to participate in the study. The superintendent survey would assist in the determination of superintendent turnover, in each district, and assist in the association comparison of personnel answers toward morale and trust. The district personnel survey was used to measure levels of trust and morale.

I used Survey Monkey as the online hosting site for the superintendent and the district personnel surveys. I requested permission to conduct the study from Executive Directors of each of the twenty regional Education Service Centers in a large southern state and asked for an email requesting participation of all 1A and 2A superintendents of small school districts. I then requested permission from the superintendents to conduct the study in their district. The participating superintendents were asked to complete the superintendent survey and forward the district personnel survey invitation to district personnel. At the end of the allotted windows for participation, I downloaded the data from Survey Monkey to an Excel spreadsheet and imported the data into SPSS for analysis. This study measured the overall relationship between a school district superintendent and employees by utilizing the Spearman's rho correlation. Additionally,

a chi-square test was used to evaluate the significance of level of trust and morale

between the superintendent and employee. I was responsible for seeking permission and

consent from the participants. Data will be securely-stored to ensure confidentiality of

participants. Moreover, random identification numbers were assigned to participants to

ensure anonymity and confidentiality of reported data.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

In Section 4, I provide the results of the data collected from this study to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between frequencies of superintendent succession in small school districts in a large southern state and the levels of trust and morale among district personnel. Approval to perform the research study was granted through the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. My IRB application was approved and assigned the #02-28-13-0137478. This section is divided into the following sections: (a) introduction, (b) data collection instrument, (c) analysis of hypotheses and research questions, and (d) conclusion.

Data collection for this study was comprised of gathering data over a period of 10 days for each of the surveys I developed. After approval was received to conduct the study by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the study commenced. On March 17, 2013, the first survey was sent to the executive directors of the 20 regional education service centers. On April 21, 2013 the follow up survey was sent to the district superintendents of the small school districts. A letter was initially sent to the superintendent to request that the survey be distributed to their staff.

The first survey, School District Superintendent Survey, was sent to 512 school district superintendents whose districts were designated as 1A or 2A school districts as defined as small school districts in the state that was the subject of this study. The state was chosen as the subject due to my professional experience as a superintendent in the state. The 1A and 2A criteria represent small school districts that have limited personnel,

which in turn may create daily situations that require a superintendent to interact. The survey sought information regarding a superintendent's work history (e.g., number of years of service and previous position held). Fifty-two district superintendents who responded participated in the survey. The second survey, School District Personnel Survey, was used to measure the levels of trust and morale of the 47 eligible personnel out of 50 respondents to participate in the study; however, some responses were incomplete. Three respondents did not meet the qualification of Question 2. For those respondents with missing data, their responses were still included in the analysis and the item or items with missing number or n were dropped from the subsequent subtotal counts. This decision ensured that all statistical factors that could contribute to the skewness of the data were eliminated. For those respondents with missing data, their responses were still included in the analysis, and the item or items with missing number or n were dropped from the subsequent subtotal counts. This decision ensured that all statistical factors that could contribute to bias and skewness of the results were eliminated through the preservation of all available information.

Analysis of Research Questions and Hypothesis

Though this study, I intended to answer the following primary research question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and the levels of trust and morale among district personnel? Two sub questions were used to assist in answering the primary research question:

1. What correlation does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel trust?

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

H_{a1}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

2. What correlation does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel morale?

H_{02}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of morale in administration among school district personnel.

H_{a2}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of morale in administration among school district personnel.

Findings

Superintendent Survey Findings

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 19.0 was used to analyze the data obtained from this study. Descriptive statistics were run, specifically, frequency and percentages for each of the survey items from the District Superintendents Survey. The

displays of data in Tables 1 through 12 provide a summary of superintendent participant responses to the survey questions.

The largest percentage (30.8%) of superintendents reported that they were from school districts with less than 100 high school students. This was followed by superintendents from high schools with 201 to 250 students (19.2%), 251 to 300 (17.3%), and 150 to 200 (15.4%) respectively. These figures were followed by relatively larger school districts as well as schools districts with 101 to 150 students, collectively accounting for 17.3% with none being more than 6.0%. Of the same school districts, 71.2% were classified as 1A school districts by the University Interscholastic League (UIL), and 28.8% were 2A school districts (using the same size categories as described earlier).

Table 1

Percentage Distribution by Size of Current High School Student Population

Size of current high school student population	Percentage
Less than 100	30.8
100-150	5.8
151-200	15.4
201-250	19.2
251-300	17.3
301-350	5.8
351-400	3.8

For the same school districts on average two superintendents had served these school districts between 2005 and 2011. Most (42.3%) school districts had only one

superintendent between the years 2005 and 2011. The maximum number of

superintendents serving a school district between 2005 and 2011 was five.

Table 2

Percentage Distribution by Number of Superintendents in the District (2005-2011)

Number of superintendents in district (2005-2011)	Percentage
1	30.8
2	30.8
3	25.0
4	11.5
5	1.9

Table 3 shows a majority (40.4 %) of the superintendents who responded to the

survey served in their current position for 7 or more years. Of all these superintendents

who responded to the survey, 71.2% reported that this was their first superintedency.

Table 3

Percentage Distribution by Number of Years Served in Current District

Years served in current district	Percentage
1	13.5
2	7.7
3	17.3
4	3.8
5	11.5
6	5.8
7 or more	40.4

Table 4 indicates that of those superintendents who are currently in their first

superintendent position, the majority (67.3%) had served as principals (either high

school, middle school, or elementary) in their districts prior to becoming a

superintendent. Of the 28.8% who reported that their current position was not their first

superintedency, 46.7% had served as a superintendent in one other district while 6.7%

had served as a superintendent for four other districts.

Table 4

Percentage Distribution by Previous Position Prior to the Superintendent Position

Position in prior district	Percentage
Asst. superintendent	9.6
Curriculum director	1.9
High school principal	44.2
Asst. high school principal	1.9
Middle school principal	15.4
Elementary principal	5.8
Others	21.2

Personnel Survey Findings

The School Personnel surveys sent on March 17, 2013 and April 21, 2013

generated 50 responses from school district personnel. A total of 32.0% responses came

from other education service centers in the surveyed state, with none accounting to more

than 4.0%. Of them, 94.0% reported that they worked in their current districts between

2005 and 2011. Thus, 47 out of 50 personnel were the only eligible respondents for the

survey. The responses of the remaining three participants were dropped from subsequent

analyses. Figures 1 to 7 and Tables 7 to 12 present the results of the analysis.

Table 5 provides percentage distribution of personnel by number of years worked

in the current district. Of the 47 eligible respondents, 23.5% had worked in their current

districts for 3 to 4 years. This number was followed by 7 to 8 years to 20+ years inclusive

(not in increasing nor decreasing order), collectively amounting to a total of 65.9%. Only

37 personnel responded to the number of superintendents they had worked for between

2005 and 2011, and data showed that these personnel had worked for an average of 2.4

superintendents during the period. From the same set of respondents, 83.8% had worked

in their currents districts for at least four years. Only 34 respondents gave information

about their gender, of which most were females (70.6%).

Table 5

Percentage Distribution by Number of Years Worked in the Current District (Personnel)

Years worked in current district	Percentage
1-2 years	2.1
3-4 years	23.5
5-6 years	8.5
7-8 years	14.9
9-10 years	10.6
10-14 years	14.9
15-19 years	17.0
20+ years	8.5

Table 6 provides the percentage distribution of personnel by current position in

the school district. The majority (70.3%) of the 37 respondents were campus faculty.

Eight (21.62%) of the respondents reported being promoted between 2005 and 2011. Of

these eight, four were promoted from a faculty position to an administrative position,

while the remaining four were within support service positions. Thirty two of the 37

participants responded to this question, and 81.2% reported that they did not believe that

promotion or nonpromotion was influenced by frequent turnover of superintendents.

Table 6

Percentage Distribution by Current Personnel Position in the School District

Position in prior district	Percentage
Central office	13.5
Campus administration	8.1
Campus faculty	70.3
Physical plant maintenance	2.7
Support service	5.4

Descriptive Statistics for Personnel Interactions Superintendent to Personnel

Superintendent's Interaction with Personnel

Figures 1 to 5 provide graphical illustrations of the percentage distributions of the frequency of superintendent to personnel interactions. All 52 superintendents responded to the survey. Of the 52 superintendents on Question 9, 44.2% reported that they professionally interact eight or more times a week with their personnel while 65.4%, on Question 10, reported nonprofessionally interacting with personnel eight or more times a week. Approximately one third (32.7%) of the superintendents reported, on Question 11, that they physically walk through the separate campuses during the workday eight or more times a week. This percentage was the same, on Question 12, with those who physically walk through the separate campuses during the workday two to four times a week. From the same set, 32.7% (Question 12) reported physically walking through departments during the workday five to seven times a week. Twenty five percent of the respondents (Q12) responded eight or more times a week to physically visiting departments. Question 13 revealed a majority, 59.6%, of superintendents reported that they attend after hours district functions two to four times each week. This number was

followed by 23.1% reporting attendance at after hours district functions of five to seven times a week. Only a few responded to attend after hour's district functions eight or more times a week (9.6%). (Figures 1 to 5; Note. Total responses for each question is $N = 52$).
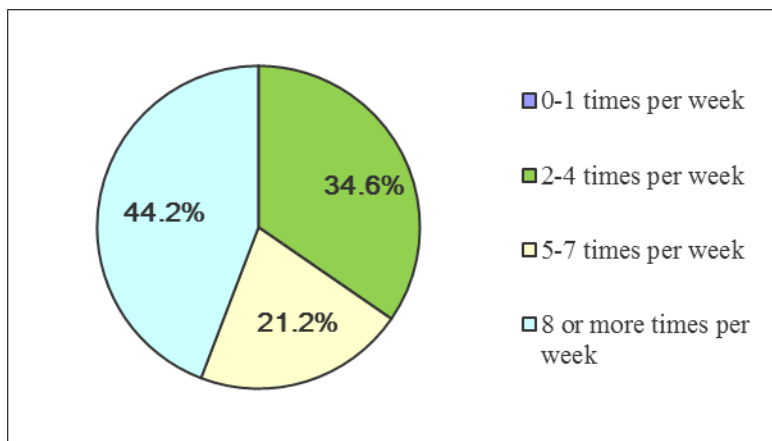
Figure 1. (Q9) Percentage distributions on how often superintendents interact professionally with the current personnel.
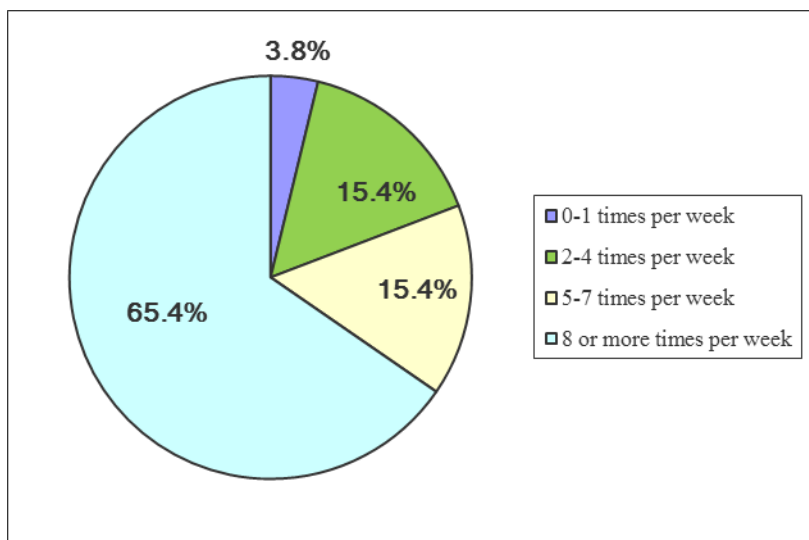
Figure 2. (Q10) Percentage distributions on how often superintendents interact nonprofessionally with the current personnel.
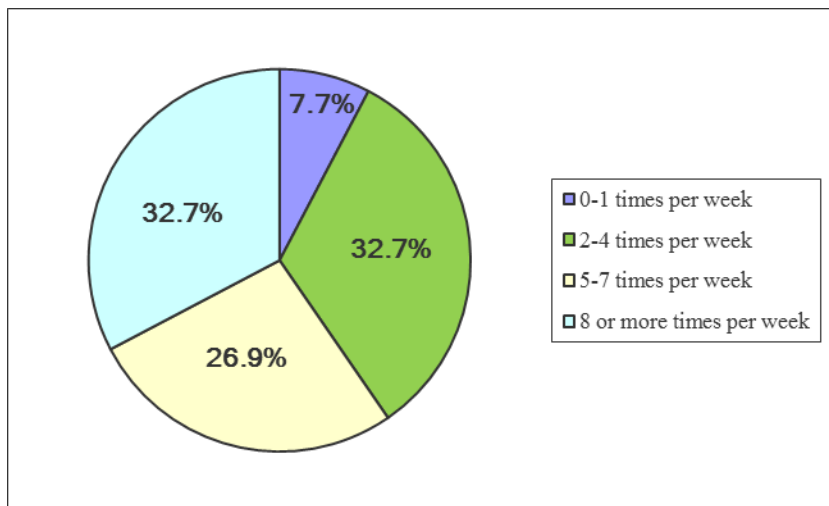
Figure 3. (Q11) Percentage distributions on how often superintendents physically walk through separate campuses during the workday.
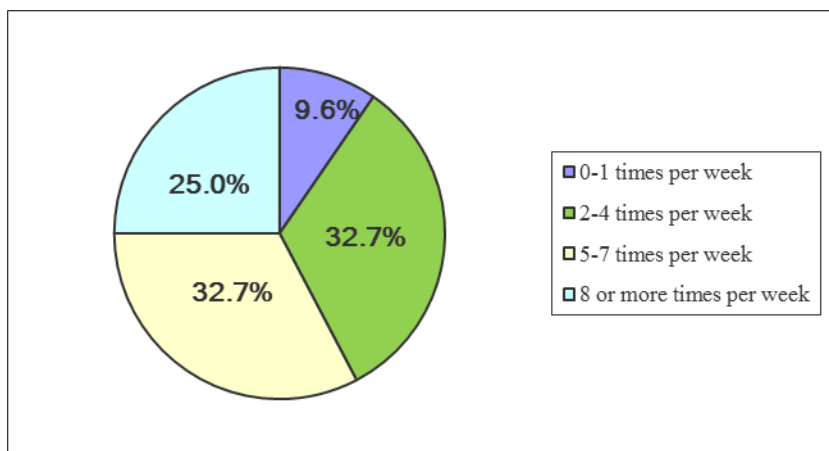
Figure 4. (Q12) Percentage distributions on how often superintendents physically walk through different departments during the workday.
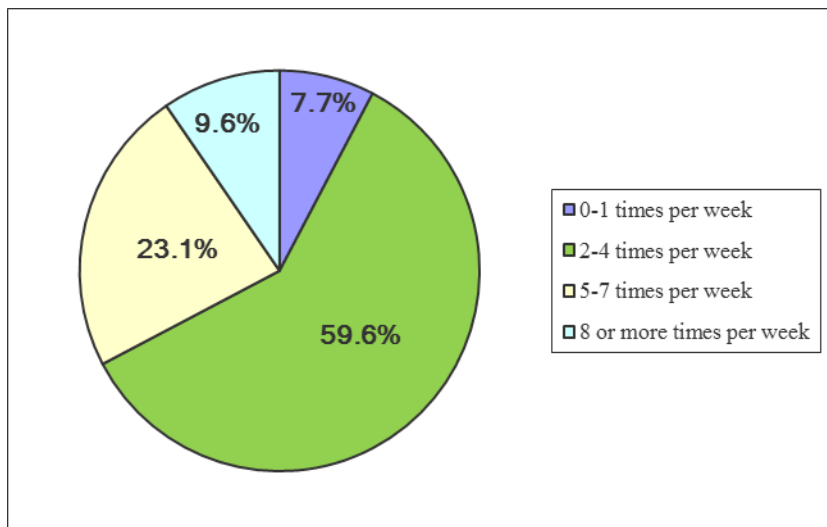
Figure 5. (Q13) Percentage distributions on how often superintendents attend the after hour's district functions.

Personnel Interaction With the Superintendent

Figures 6 through 11 provide graphic illustrations of the percentage distributions of the frequency of personnel to superintendent interactions. While 47 eligible personnel participated in the survey, an option not to respond to all questions was given, in order not to force an answer from the options in each question. Out of 36 personnel who responded to Question 13 on professional interaction with their superintendent, 66.7% reported that they interact with their superintendent professionally 0 to 1 time a week. Casual interaction is not significant, since only 50.0% of the 36 who responded to Question 14 had interacted casually with their superintendent at the same frequency. The data revealed that of the 36 personnel who responded to question 15, 72.7% reported physically seeing their superintendent during the workday 0 to 4 times a week. Moreover, from a total of 33 personnel respondents on Question 16, 71.4% reported seeing the

superintendent travelling in their district at the same frequency. Less frequent interaction

between other personnel and the superintendent was also observed by 35 respondents on

Question 17, as 71.4% reported seeing their superintendent speaking with other personnel

for about 0 to 4 times a week. Of the 32 respondents on Question 18, 51.4% reported that

they only saw their superintendent during after hour's district function about 0 to 1 time a

week while 31.4% answered 2 to 4 times a week. (See Figures 6 – 11; *Note: Total*

responses for each question N, given at the end of the header).
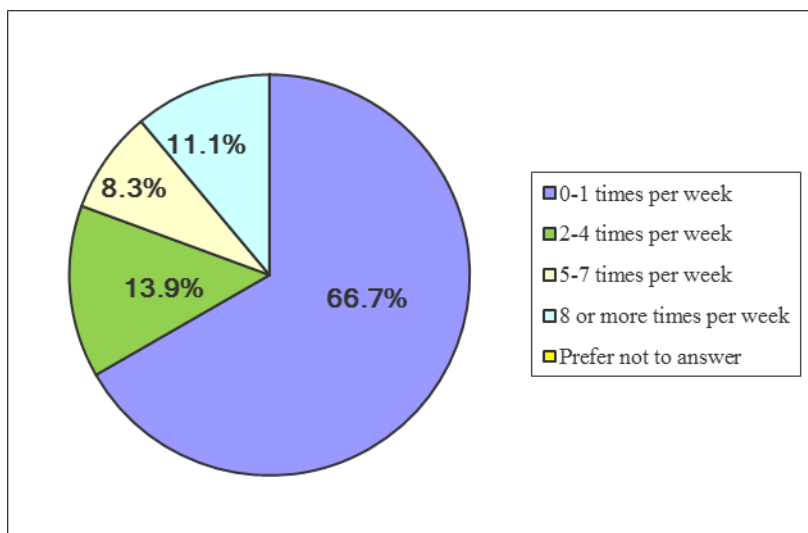
Figure 6. (Q13) Percentage distributions on how often personnel interact professionally

with the current superintendent.
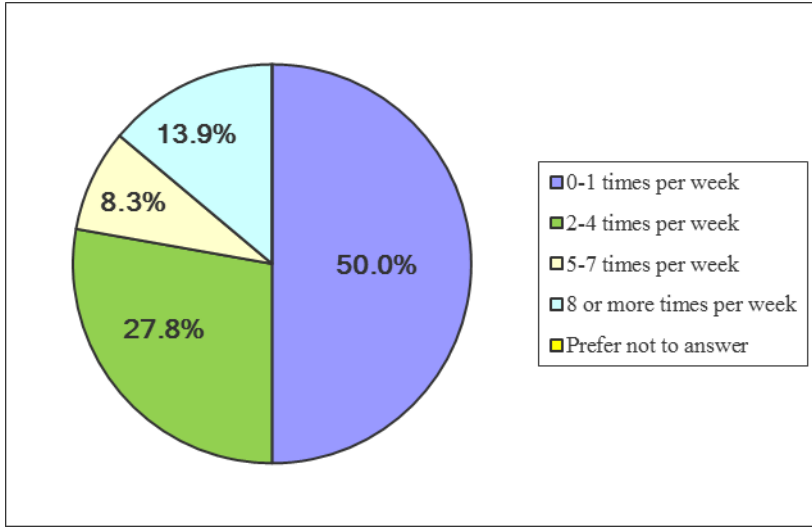
Figure 7. (Q14) Percentage distributions on how often personnel interact non-professionally with the current superintendent.
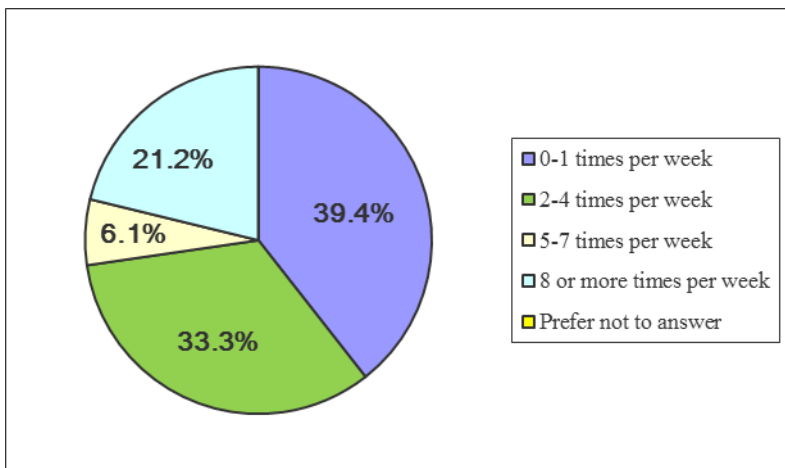
Figure 8. (Q15) Percentage distributions on how often do you see physically the superintendent around the campus during workday.
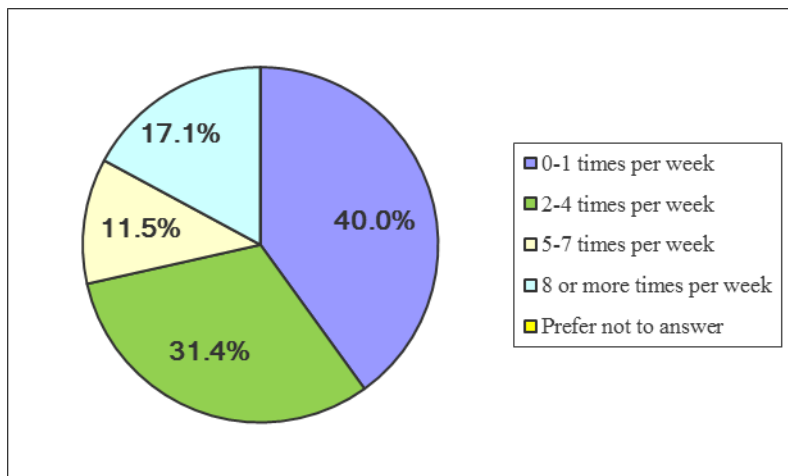
Figure 9. (Q16) Percentage distributions on how often do you see the superintendent traveling around the district.
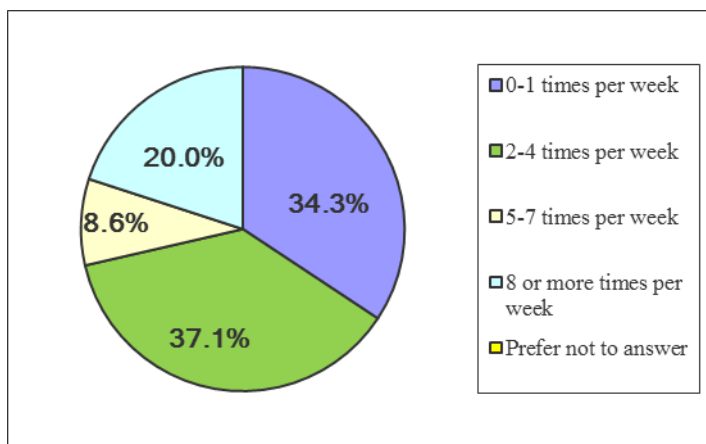
Figure 10. (Q17) Percentage distributions on how often do you see the superintendent speaking with other employees around the district.
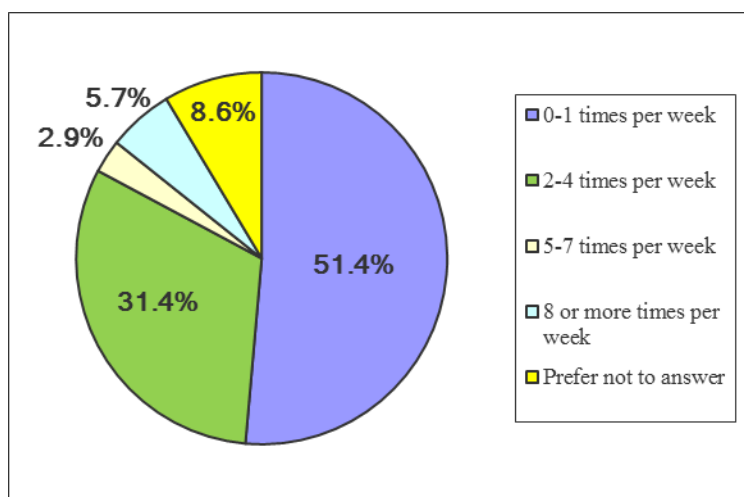
Figure 11. (Q18) Percentage distributions on how often do you see the superintendent after hours at district functions.

Descriptive Statistics for Superintendents' Attribution to Trust and Morale Levels

This section provides a summary of the findings regarding the attributions of frequent superintendent turnovers between 2005 to 2011 by the surveyed superintendents to both trust and morale levels of personnel. Aside from determining the percentage of superintendents who attribute such to both trust and morale, the rank of both trust and morale, in terms of the frequency of attribution of trust, is compared with other identified district factors.

Attribution to Levels of Trust in Superintendent Position Perception

Figure 12 provides a visual display of how frequent superintendent turnovers between 2005 to 2011 were attributed with poor levels of trust among personnel was ranked by the superintendents in comparison with other factors. The data indicated that

7.7% of the superintendents attribute frequent superintendent turnover to poor level of trust.
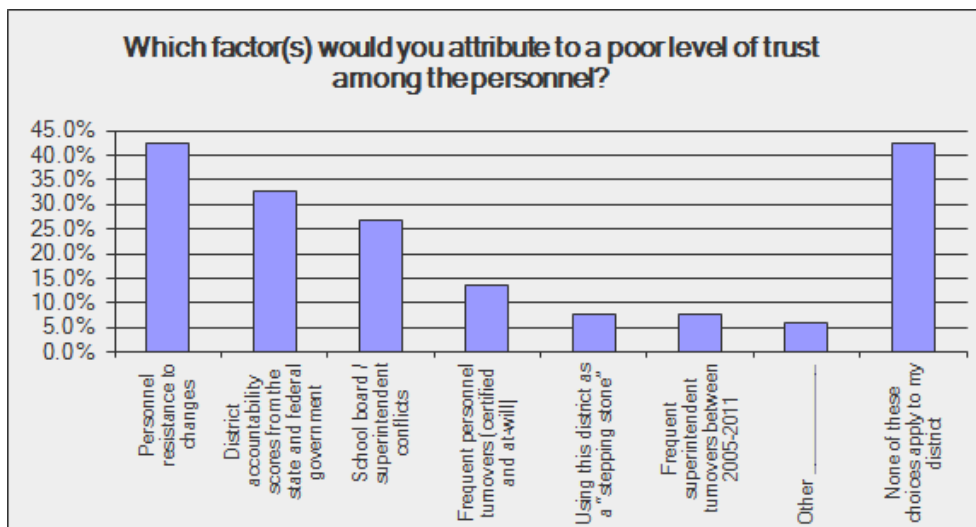
Figure 12. Factors attributed to poor level of trust among the personnel.

Attribution to Levels of Morale in Superintendent Position Perception

Figure 13 shows how frequent superintendent turnovers between 2005 to 2011 were attributed to poor level of morale among personnel was ranked by the superintendents in comparison with other factors. It was observed that 5.8% of the superintendents attribute such to poor level of morale.
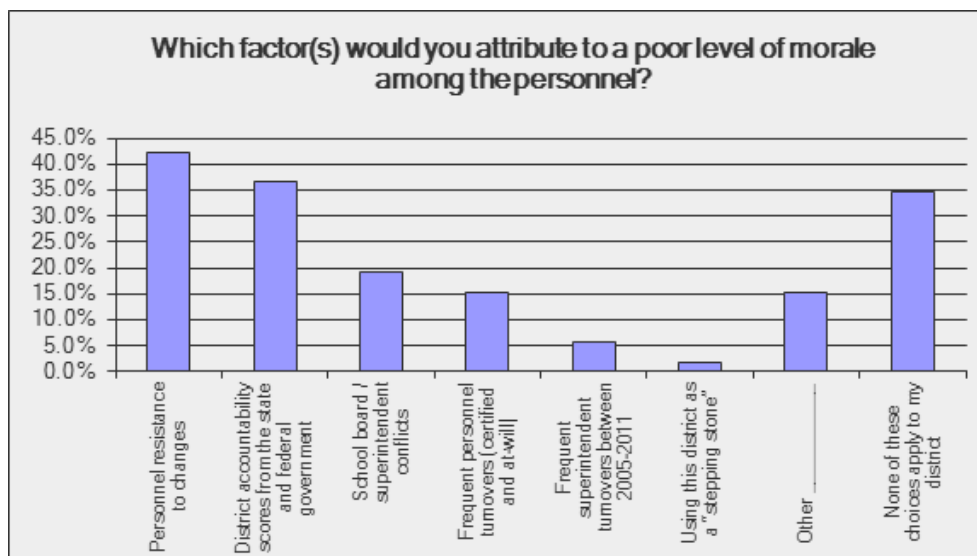
Figure 13. Factors attributed to poor level of trust among the personnel.

Data Analysis

Results of correlational analysis (using SPSS) for the association of the

frequency of superintendent succession on the level of school district personnel trust are

discussed. Evaluation of related hypotheses was done in three parts: (a) correlation

between superintendent to personnel interaction and trust level perception of the

superintendent among personnel, (b) correlation between personnel to superintendent

interaction and trust level of personnel to their superintendent, and (c) influence of the

trust level of the personnel on superintendents. The first two parts of the analysis were

essential to determine whether a superintendent's personal interactions with staff has an

association on developing trust. The last part of the analysis assessed how personnel's

trust in their superintendent is associated with the frequent turnover of superintendents

between 2005 to 2011. It has to be clarified that the associations were assessed using

correlation methods, so no causation is implied; they may provide useful insights as to

how likely personnel's trust level is affected by the frequent turnover of superintendents between 2005 and 2011. Answers for the first part of the study analysis were obtained from the School District Superintendent Survey, while answers for the second and third parts of the analysis were obtained from the School District Personnel Survey. Necessary summary (descriptive) averages are also provided when applicable. The statistical operation used to analyze the data was Spearman rho correlation. Results and interpretation of obtained values from SPSS are also presented.

Correlation between Superintendent to Personnel Interaction and Trust Perception Level

Table 7 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of responses of superintendents on their perception of trust level among their personnel. For the purpose of obtaining correlation coefficients a point coding scale was utilized. Answers with low level were given a code of one; answers with neutral level were given a code of two; and answers with high level were given a code of three. It was observed that three-fourths of superintendents responded with a high level of trust among personnel. The mean of the coded values was 2.73.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Trust Level among Their Personnel Perception of

Superintendents

Trust level	Frequency	Percentage
High level	39	75.0
Neutral level	12	23.1
Low level	1	1.9

Note. Total number of respondents is 52 ($N = 52$).

Note that in the School District Superintendent Survey, responses to personal interaction with personnel were coded using a four-point coding scale, i.e. answers with 0 to1 times per week were given a code of one; 2 to 4 times per week were given a code of two; and 5 to 7 times per week were given a code of three; and 8 or more times per week were given a code of four. Responses to these questions were summed up, resulting to an average sum of 14.44 for each response.

Correlating the sum of the responses to personal interaction with trust level, a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient value of 0.196 was observed. Moreover, a two-tailed significance p-value of 0.165 was obtained. This result led to the nonrejection of the null hypothesis; hence, suggesting that while there may be a very weak direct relationship between the frequency of personal interactions and trust level perception of superintendents among their personnel, the relationship is not significant.

Chi-square Test Between Personnel-to-Superintendent Interaction

and Trust Level

Table 8 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of responses of personnel on their trust level to the superintendent position due to the frequent superintendent turnover between 2005 and 2011. For the purpose of obtaining correlation coefficients a point coding scale was utilized. Low answers were given a code of one; somewhat low answers were given a code of two; neutral answers were given a code of three; somewhat high were given a code of four; and high were given a code of five. Only 23 were found to be eligible responses, which were spread quite sporadically. The other 24 either did not respond or did not experience two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005 to 2011.

In the School District Personnel Survey, responses to personal interaction with personnel were coded using a 4-point coding scale, i.e. answers with 0 to1 times per week were given a code of one; 2 to 4 times per week were given a code of two; and 5 to 7 times per week were given a code of three; and 8 or more times per week were given a code of four.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Trust Level of Personnel to the Superintendent Position

Trust Level	Frequency	Percentage
High Level	3	13.0
Somewhat High Level	5	21.7
Neutral Level	9	39.1
Somewhat Low Level	4	17.4
Low Level	2	8.7

Note. Total number of respondents is 23 (N = 23*).*

Unlike with the School District Superintendent Survey, responses to these questions cannot be summed due to the varying response rate. Hence, responses to these questions were averaged, resulting in an average mean of 1.86 for each response. Correlating the mean of the responses to personal interaction with trust level, a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient value of 0.319 was obtained. Moreover, two-tailed significance p-value of 0.138 was noted. This result led to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis; hence, suggesting that while there may be a weak direct relationship between the frequency of personal interactions and trust level of personnel to the superintendent position, the relationship is not significant.

Chi-Square Test Between Influence of the Superintendent and Trust Level

Tables 9 to 14 show the frequency distributions of responses of personnel on several superintendent influence perception questions. For measuring trust, responses to questions 19, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 29 were investigated. As noted earlier, 'No' responses were given a code of zero; 'Yes' responses were given a code of one. Other responses were discarded from the analysis since they were missing. The chi-square value, p-value

and the corresponding conclusion were presented for each item to the level of personnel trust on the superintendent position due to frequent turnovers between 2005 and 2011. In addition, a consolidated value for the several influence variables was obtained. This consolidated value was solved by averaging out the coded values of the responses on the influence variables. It was found that an average respondent had a mean of 0.5931 for the influence variables.

Correlating the mean of these responses with trust level of personnel, a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient value of 0.597 was observed. Moreover, two-tailed significance p-value of 0.003 was observed. This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis; hence, suggesting that trust level of personnel is significantly related with frequency of superintendent turnovers, from which a strong relationship was observed.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test of Sharing Opinion With the Current Superintendent (Q19)

Answer	Level of Trust (Question 31 – Personnel Trust)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	1	0	0	0	2
Yes	0	3	7	4	3	17
Total	1	4	7	4	3	19

Note. Chi-square value is 11.04, has p-value 0.03, and significant at alpha=5%.

Table 10

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test of Superintendent's Ability to Make Positive

Changes (Q24)

Answer	Level of Trust (Question 31 – Personnel Trust)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	4	0	0	0	5
Yes	0	0	5	5	3	13
Total	1	4	5	5	3	18

Note. Chi-square value is 18.00, has p-value <0.01, and significant at alpha=5%.

Table 11

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test on Having a High Level of Trust With the

Current Superintendent (Q25)

Answer	Level of Trust (Question 31 – Personnel Trust)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	3	2	0	0	6
Yes	0	0	6	5	3	14
Total	1	3	8	5	3	20

Note. Chi-square value is 12.86, has p-value 0.01, and significant at alpha=5%.

Table 12

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test on Developing a Relationship With the

Superintendent (Q 26)

Answer	Level of Trust (Question 31 – Personnel Trust)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	0	0	0	1	2
Yes	1	3	6	4	2	16
Total	2	3	6	4	3	18

Note. Chi-square value is 6.19, has p-value 0.19, and not significant at alpha=5%.

Table 13

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test on Developing a Positive Level of Trust

With the Superintendent (Q27)

Answer	Level of Trust (Question 31 – Personnel Trust)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	0	0	0	1	2
Yes	1	3	8	4	2	18
Total	2	3	8	4	3	20

Note. Chi-square value is 7.04, has p-value 0.13, and not significant at alpha=5%.

Table 14

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test on Developing a Positive Level of Trust in

the District (Q29)

Answer	Level of Trust (Question 31 – Personnel Trust)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	0	0	0	0	1	1
Yes	1	3	8	5	2	19
Total	1	3	8	5	3	20

Note. Chi-square value is 5.97, has p-value 0.20, and not significant at alpha=5%.

To fully understand how these variables relate with levels of trust of personnel to the superintendent position due to frequent turnovers in superintendents between 2005 and 2011, each Chi-square test result with the aforementioned levels of trust was calculated. The analysis revealed the following results:

- o Ability to share one's opinion with the current superintendent is moderately correlated with frequent turnovers in superintendence between 2005 and 2011.

- o Having a belief in relying on the superintendent to make positive changes in the district is positively correlated with level of trust due to frequent turnovers in superintendents between 2005 and 2011.

- o Having a heightened trust for the superintendent position is positively correlated with the level of trust due to frequent turnovers in superintendents between 2005 and 2011.

However, the same set of results led to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis; hence, revealing that longevity of the superintendent's position is not correlated with the level of trust of personnel to the superintendent position due to frequent turnovers in superintendence between 2005 and 2011.

Evaluating Hypotheses H_{o1} and H_{o2}

Results of the correlational analysis for the association of the frequency of superintendent succession on the level of the school district personnel morale are discussed. Evaluation of related hypotheses was done in three parts, which are parallel to that of evaluating trust. Again, the first two parts were essential to determine whether personnel interactions have associations on enhancing morale of the personnel towards the position. The last part directly assessed how personnel's morale towards their position is influenced by the frequent turnover of superintendence between 2005 and 2011. Similar with exploring correlations to trust and morale, answers for the first part were obtained from the School District Superintendent Survey while answers for the second and third parts were obtained from the School District Personnel Survey. Necessary summary (descriptive) measures are also given in this section whenever applicable.

Statistical technique used in this section was the same as those performed in evaluating

correlations to trust and morale: Spearman's rho correlation.

Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Superintendent-to-Personnel Interaction

and Morale Perception Level

Table 15 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of responses of

superintendents on their perception of morale level of their personnel. For the purpose of

obtaining correlation coefficients, answers were given the same coding as with that of

trust level. Again, most of the superintendents perceive a high level of morale of their

personnel. Taking the mean of the coded values, an average of 2.73 was obtained.

Table 15

Frequency Distribution of Morale Level of their Personnel Perception of Superintendents

Morale Level	Frequency	Percentage
High Level	31	59.6
Neutral Level	15	28.9
Low Level	6	11.5

Note. Total number of respondents is 52 (N = 52).

Correlating the sum of the responses (obtained similarly with trust level) with

personal interaction with morale level, a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient value of

0.043 was observed. Moreover, two-tailed significance p-value of 0.763was observed.

This result led to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis; hence, suggesting that there is

virtually no relationship between the frequencies of personal interactions to the

superintendent's perception of morale level of its personnel.

Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Personnel-to-Superintendent Interaction

and Morale Level

Table 16 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of responses of

personnel on their morale level to their work position and frequent superintendent

turnover between 2005 and 2011. For the purpose of obtaining correlation coefficients,

the coding (a) high level, (b) somewhat high level, (c) neutral level, (d) somewhat low

level, and (e) low level were used. For the purpose of obtaining correlation coefficients a

point coding scale was utilized. Again, the same set of 23 respondents was found to have

given eligible responses.

Table 16

Frequency Distribution of Morale Level of Personnel in Their Work Position

Morale Level	Frequency	Percentage
High Level	2	8.7
Somewhat High Level	7	30.4
Neutral Level	7	30.4
Somewhat Low Level	5	21.9
Low Level	2	8.7

Note. Total number of respondents is 23 (N = 23*).*

Correlating the sum of the responses (obtained similarly with trust level) with

personnel interaction with morale level, a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient value

of 0.119 was observed. Moreover, two-tailed significance p-value of 0.589 was observed.

This result led to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis; hence, suggesting that there is

no significant relationship between the frequency of personal interactions to the morale level of personnel towards his/her work position.

Chi-Square Test Between Influence of the Superintendent and Morale Level

Tables 17 to 21 show the frequency distributions of responses of personnel on several superintendent influence perception questions. For measuring morale, responses to questions 20, 22, 23, 28, and 30 were investigated. Coded values were the same with that of trust level. In addition, a consolidated value for the several influence variables was obtained similarly with that of trust influence variable. It was found that an average respondent had a mean of 0.774 for the influence variables.

Correlating the mean of these responses with morale level of personnel, a Spearman's rank correlation value of 0.034 was observed. Moreover, two-tailed significance p-value of 0.881 was observed. This result suggests that there is no significant relationship between morale level of personnel and frequent superintendent turnovers. However, the chi-square test revealed that only one of the individual tests was rejected; hence, these individuals revealed that morale level is significantly influenced in having a positive feeling with the job due to frequent superintendent turnovers.

Table 17

Frequency Distribution and Chi-Square Test on the Effect of Frequent Turnovers in

Developing a Relationship With Superintendents (Q20)

Answer	Level of Morale (Question 32 – Personnel Morale)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	0	2	2	4	2	10
Yes	2	2	3	0	0	7
Total	2	4	5	4	2	17

Note. Chi-square value is 7.92, has p-value 0.10, and not significant at alpha=5%.

Table 18

Frequency Distribution and Chi-Square Test on the Effect of Frequent Turnovers in

Developing a Positive Outlook on the Job (Q22)

Answer	Level of Morale (Question 32 – Personnel Morale)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	4	3	1	0	9
Yes	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	1	4	3	1	1	10

Note. Chi-square value is 10.00, has p-value 0.04, and significant at alpha=5%.

Table 19

Frequency Distribution and Chi-Square Test on the Effect of Frequent Turnovers in

Developing a Positive Outlook on the Position of the District (Q23)

Answer	Level of Morale (Question 32 – Personnel Morale)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	2	4	4	2	0	12
Yes	0	1	0	1	1	3
Total	2	5	4	3	1	15

Note. Chi-square value is 5.83, has p-value 0.21, and not significant at alpha=5%.

Table 20

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test on Developing a Positive Level of Morale

With the Superintendent (Q28)

Answer	Level of Morale (Question 32 – Personnel Morale)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	1	1	0	1	0	3
Yes	1	3	5	5	2	16
Total	2	4	5	6	2	19

Note. Chi-square value is 3.33, has p-value 0.50, and not significant at alpha=5%.

Table 21

Frequency Distribution and Chi Square Test on Developing a Positive Level of Morale in

the District (Q30)

Answer	Level of Morale (Question 32 – Personnel Morale)					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
No	0	0	0	1	0	1
Yes	1	4	6	6	2	19
Total	1	4	6	7	2	20

Note. Chi-square value is 1.96, has p-value 0.74, and not significant at alpha=5%.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, the levels of trust among district personnel

to the superintendent position is directly and significantly related with frequencies of

superintendent succession in small school districts. It was found that the ability to share

one's opinion with the current superintendent, having a belief in relying on the

superintendent to make positive changes in the district and having a high level of trust in

the superintendent position are positively associated with increased level of trust on the

superintendent. It is highly recommended in future research to explore whether the

association is causative in nature. These findings led to the rejection of the null hypothesis of the first sub question; hence, there is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

Based on the findings from this study the levels of morale among district personnel to their work positions is generally unrelated with the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts. However, a few measures of morale brought by frequency of superintendent succession did indicate that a significant relationship with morale levels is evident in the present study, particularly the items that relate to the personnel not attempting to develop a relationship with superintendents and positive feeling with the job even with the frequent superintendent turnovers. There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of morale in administration among school district personnel; hence, these findings led to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis of the second sub question.

Summary

Section 4 provided the findings from the statistical analysis of data for this study. Two survey instruments, the School District Superintendent Survey and the School District Personnel Surveys were used to gather data for this study. The purpose of this study was to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts and levels of trust and

morale among district personnel. The Spearman's rho correlation was used to measure

the existing correlations between variable levels of personnel trust and morale. Chi

Square analysis was used to determine frequency distribution of the personnel "yes or

no" questions. Section 5 of this study provides the interpretation of the findings,

implications for social change, and recommendations for future study.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview of the Study

The role of the school superintendent is vital to the academic success of the students (Byrd et al., 2006; Trevino et al., 2008) and the performance of teachers and staff (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). The superintendent acts as a leader in guiding the intellectual and the morale development of teachers and students (Alsbury, 2008). When school districts are unable to stabilize and maintain an extended tenure of a school superintendent, studies have shown a decrease in staff morale and satisfaction within the district creating uncertainty, uneasiness, and the eventual turnover of teachers (Alsbury, 2008; Baker et al., 2010). Further, studies reported that the brief tenure of a superintendent may have a negative effect on the incoming superintendent (Cooper et al., 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2006) and the success of the school district (Council of Urban Boards of Education, 2001). Succession of the school superintendent therefore is important in school leadership and organizational management.

Small school districts are confronted with an increasing rate of superintendent succession, which affects the overall performance of students and teachers (Texas Association of School Boards & Texas Association of School Administrators, 2008). While there are several factors affecting superintendent succession, the political practice of school board control in school districts continues the elevated superintendent succession rate (Trevino et al., 2008). The increased rate of superintendent succession may influence personnel morale and trust, due to a short lived relationship with the superintendent (Baker et al., 2010; Trevino et al., 2008). The purpose of this study was to

examine the relationship between superintendent succession and the level of trust and morale of district personnel working in small school districts of a large southern state. This study used a quantitative correlational research design, which sought to identify a possible statistically significant relationship between the superintendent succession rate and the level of trust and morale of district personnel. The intent of this study was to examine a present dilemma and its variables. There was no intent to control any variable characteristics with interventions or experimentation. Furthermore, the study was not designed to evaluate cause and effect among superintendent succession and the morale and trust variables studied.

The study focused on the school district personnels' perceptions of the level of trust and morale in the school district and the effect of the frequent succession of superintendents of small districts, with 429 or less high school students. This study covered the succession rate of superintendents of a 6-year period between 2005 and 2011. I designed and used two survey instruments to assess the personnel trust and morale of superintendent and personnel employed under 1A or 2A districts (UIL, 2010). The overarching research question for this study was as follows: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less, and levels of trust and morale among district personnel? Specifically, this study explored the answers to two subquestions: (a) What relationship does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel trust? (b) What relationship does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel morale?

Interpretation of Findings

The general research question about whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust and morale among district personnel was answered following the two sets of hypotheses:

H_{o1}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

There were four variables considered in determining whether H_{o1} is rejected or accepted. These variables include; (a) superintendent-to-personnel interaction, (b) personnel to superintendent interaction, (c) influence of the superintendent, and (d) perceived trust level. Correlating the sum values of the four variables indicate the nonrejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel are not significantly related. This unrelated relationship reveals that that longevity of the superintendent's position does not impact the level of trust of personnel to the superintendent position due to frequent turnovers in superintendence between 2005 and 2011.

H_{a1}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel.

Based on the correlation results of the four variables, $H_{a1,}$ or the first alternative

hypothesis, is rejected, indicating that there exists no relationship between the frequency

of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less

and levels of trust in administration among school district personnel. However, the

correlation of the individual variables revealed that (a) sharing of opinions and beliefs of

superintendent's ability for social changes may influence the level of trust and (b) high

beliefs of the superintendent's position influence the increase of trust of the staff. With

the acceptance of the first null hypothesis, the subsequent section details the answer to

the first research question.

Research Question 1. What Relationship Does the Frequency of Superintendent Succession Have on the Level of School District Personnel Trust?

The discoveries from this study showed a relationship to those could support

findings of earlier studies that reported social interaction can significantly build trust

(Firestone, 2009) and increase morale (Covey, 1992; Grissom & Anderson, 2012).

Furthermore, new superintendents requiring support from personnel may disrupt

leadership practices of previous leadership, which can affect the development of trust and

the morale of the personnel. The pattern of the previous leadership style may need the full

understanding from the new superintendent as there is no quick solution to gain the

immediate acceptance of personnel to the leadership changes that take place in the school

system (Grissom & Anderson, 2012).

Although the personnel to superintendent interaction is not significantly related to

the personnel trust in leadership, the results of this study further revealed that within the

superintendent to personnel relationship, trust building is more important than supervision of personnel's action and job performance. Early studies supported this finding by claiming that employees' performance is influenced by the type of trust the leaders provide to his or her followers (Goenz, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

An incoming superintendent may reestablish the trust level of personnel by allowing them to share their opinions and participate in school decisions that affect their lives. The school superintendent may need to convey his or her ideas for instilling positive changes for the school district by their leadership (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). As such, open communication is important to establish the trust of personnel with their superintendents. When personnel are excluded from discussions designed to solve problems, job performance and teamwork of employees may be affected.

H_{o2}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and the level of morale in among school district personnel.

There were four variables considered in determining whether H_{o2} is rejected or accepted. These variables include; (a) superintendent-to-personnel interaction, (b) personnel-to-superintendent interaction, (c) influence of the superintendent, and (d) perceived morale level. Correlating the sum values of the four variables indicate the nonrejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and level of morale among school district personnel are not significantly related.

H_{a2}: There is a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and level of morale among school district personnel.

Based on the correlation results of the four variables, H_{a2} alternative hypothesis was rejected, indicating that there exists no relationship between frequency of superintendent succession in small school districts of 429 high school students or less and level of morale among school district personnel. However, the rejections of all correlation results of the four variables revealed that morale level is significantly and strongly affected by both efforts to develop a relationship with superintendents and positive feeling with the job due to frequent superintendent turnovers. Based on these results, the subsequent section details the answer to Research Question 2.

Research Question 2. What relationship does the frequency of superintendent succession have on the level of school district personnel morale?

The acceptance of the second null hypotheses indicating that there is no significant relationship between superintendent succession and personnel morale was consistent across the three variables examined: (a) superintendent to personnel interaction, (b) personnel to superintendent interaction, and (c) influence of the superintendent. The perceived morale level of personnel is not directly related to the pattern of superintendent turnover. This finding yielded a contrasting result to earlier studies of Grissom and Anderson (2012). These authors implied that the faculty and staff support systems established by school leadership develop over time. As such, the leadership role that increases the level of personnel morale requires the longevity of the

leadership post. Positive morale develops along with the growth of curriculum and educational achievement established by a competent school leader (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). The frequent turnover of school leadership results in misdirection of organizational vision, which affects the personnel morale (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). As results of the study contradict early empirical findings, an unknown factor could provide understanding to the perceived morale level of the personnel used in this study. The results further suggest that relationship building, which requires longer tenure of a school leader, remains a significant factor linking the variables perceived level of morale and leadership succession.

Application of Findings

The feeling of starting over and adjusting to the next educational leader does not allow for building of positive working relationships that will allow for a trusting social structure within the district (Goenz, 2009). With the limited literature concerning the link of leadership turnover to personnel morale and trust levels, the present study contributes to understanding of the possible impact of leadership turnover on the school personnels' trust and moral levels.

The findings of the study are valuable to small school districts who intend to create a positive working environment for both personnel and superintendent. As higher school accountability has been placed upon school leadership, school management may need to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to retain superintendents which would allow them sufficient time to accomplish the desired outcomes and build the educational structure that will maintain success (Harmon & Schafft, 2009; Jones &

Howley, 2009; Trevino et al., 2008).

Implications for Social Changes

Based on the findings from this study, positive relationships can be associated with the ability of the superintendent to interact with the school personnel. It was noted earlier that regular interaction of the superintendent with school stakeholders may enhance personnel morale. However, it should be noted that superintendents assigned in larger school districts may not take time to reach out and interact with district wide stakeholders as compared to smaller districts (Baker et al., 2010). This postulation may imply that districts with high superintendent turnover may also experience high faculty turnover as a result of the inability of the leaders to address deteriorating morale and trust of the population of personnel (Alsbury, 2008).

In addressing the turnover of school superintendents, school boards may need to prioritize the implementation of programs in school districts where there are strong public criticisms (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). One way that superintendents in small districts can manage public scrutiny and address issues of low morale and trust is by interacting with all personnel and engaging the personnel in school decision making processes (Harmon & Schafft, 2009; Jones & Howley, 2009). Engaging the personnel in school affairs is an important strategy in the superintendents' interest to integrate himself or herself in the new community. Johnstone et al. (2009) asserted that successful integration of superintendents in the new academic community influences organizational outcomes and students' academic success. Doing such would require new superintendents to communicate effectively and develop a positive relationship with all stakeholders in

order to establish a positive environment that will nurture the possibilities of an extended

tenure (Jones & Howley, 2009; Trevino et al., 2008). Several superintendents suggested

that exposure to the community, by attending school and community events, was

important for building relationships (Wright & Harris, 2010). At the school district level,

positive social change could assist at determining the leadership profile of every school

superintendent. Also, it could assist in identifying leadership training needs to influence

the morale and trust of the school personnel and consequently the academic performance

of the students. The subsequent section details the step-by-step recommendation required

to achieve positive social change.

Recommendations for Action

While the discussion of this study articulated significant findings requiring further

actions and research, this section details how these findings have a potential relevance to

improving leadership in school districts in a large southern state. As a result of this study,

the following are recommended:

1. Turnover of superintendents in small school districts affect the trust level of the

   school personnel, it is recommended that factors affecting stability of the

   superintendent position be addressed to resolve issues at the school and district

   levels. Review of the literature would suggest that internal school politics and the

   increasing demand for accountability should be the primordial issues that need

   resolution in order to effect change in the school system.

2. Effectively communicating and establishing a positive relationship with school

   personnel were identified as factors affecting the levels of morale and trust of

personnel to new superintendents. It is therefore recommended that qualifications for hiring superintendents may need to consider the interpersonal communication and transformational leadership styles.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study was limited by the data obtained from school districts of a large southern state with multiple superintendents over a six-year period and thus findings cannot be generalized across all school districts. Inherent to the design of this present study, leadership styles, superintendent seniority, work experience, and educational qualification have not been assessed to determine their effect on personnels' trust and morale. Further, effects of superintendent succession on school and student performance as well as attrition or turnover rates of teachers and school administrators have not been established in this study. These limitations could potentially be addressed using quantitative quasi-experimental research, to determine the cause and effect relationship between demographic variables of the superintendents and the personnel morale and trust. Similarly, a quasi-experimental research study could establish the cause-effect relationship between superintendents' turnover and students' academic performance.

Based on the fact that this study was non-experimental and significant information in the present study was affected by the data limitations, additional studies are needed. For instance, the personnel who participated in the survey were allowed to skip a question; thus, affecting the analysis of the answers. It is further recommended that future studies include expanding the range of years examined for superintendents' succession to collect a wide range of personnel experiences concerning their respective

exposure to leadership turnover. A longitudinal study of the effects of superintendents'

rate of the turnover to morale and trust of school personnel could establish more

conclusive evidence concerning the relationship of these variables.

Future studies could also explore the effects of gender of the superintendents to

leadership and communication styles and use the research outcomes in establishing the

effects of gender to superintendents' rate of turnover and school performance. A

qualitative study could also be conducted to gather an in-depth understanding of the

experiences of the superintendents that led to ending their service in the school district.

Future researchers could potentially conduct a follow-up qualitative study concerning the

survey responses of the participants. A qualitative study, particularly a phenomenological

study, would allow for deeper and more personal responses by the participants thus

providing rich descriptions of their experiences concerning the trust and morale between

superintendent and school personnel. Furthermore, a qualitative case study on leadership

turnover in a specific school district among the school personnel could provide empirical

information unique to a district.

Conclusions

Small school districts are confronted with an increasing rate and the subsequent

issues of superintendent succession (Texas Association of School Boards & Texas

Association of School Administrators, 2008). In the past, unstable school leadership has

been handled through resolving issues of school politics and accountability among the

school boards, superintendents, and all stakeholders (Trevino et al., 2008). However,

continued political practice of control has resulted in the increasing rate of superintendent

succession (Trevino et al., 2008), which may influence school personnel's levels of

morale and trust. Morale and trust are elements required in a cohesive team to deliver

positive performance (Coburn & Russell, 2008). When morale and trust become issues in

the organization, concerns with the district accountability, school board relations,

community relations, and staff relations may challenge the leadership and performance of

the district (Trevino et al., 2008).

The superintendent of is responsible for the overall supervision of instructional

and organizational outcomes of the school district. Superintendents must establish

positive relationships with teachers to influence and guide them in the delivery of

effective instruction to students. The leadership function of superintendents requires that

they communicate effectively with the stakeholders concerning the development plan,

instructional strategies, and priority issues requiring solutions (Hoyle et al., 2005).

However, political issues relating to the resignations of school superintendents may affect

the established personnel to superintendent relationship (Byrd et al., 2006; Trevino et al.,

2008). Additional issues that influence the high rate of superintendent succession in the

large southern state include the increasing demand for performance in students'

instruction and testing (Trevino et al., 2008). In conclusion, superintendent succession

may hinder the district's efforts to improve instructional programs because student

learning and personnel adapting to a new leadership system, communication styles, and

educational philosophy may take time to develop (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Based on the findings from this study it would appear that the frequent turnover of

the school superintendents may be associated with apprehension, uncertainty, and low

morale of district personnel which could impact the overall success of the school district. While the factors of low trust and morale are perceived among school stakeholders, survey results of school districts participating in this study indicated that, despite frequent turnover of leadership, there has been no conclusive evidence that trust and morale are significantly affected by leadership succession, particularly in the school district of the large southern state.

Summary

This correlational study examined school district personnel's perceptions of the level of trust and morale in the school district, particularly the effect of the frequent succession of superintendents of small districts in a large southern state. Using schools with 429 or less high school students, a survey was administered to determine the level of trust and morale of school district personnel. This section discussed the implications of the findings to the current literature and recommended actions to resolve issues of superintendents' succession and the possible effects on the academic performance of students in the school districts.

This present study provided the empirical evidence demonstrating the correlations between superintendent succession and levels of morale and trust of school personnel. A significant finding of this study is that while superintendents' role in establishing positive relationships with school personnel is essential in trust and morale building, the levels of personnel's trust and morale do not significantly relate with leadership succession in the school district of the large southern state. Based on the findings from this study, future studies could be conducted to identify other factors and the levels at which these factors

influence school leadership succession. Future studies may include exploring the perceptions of trust and morale of district personnel in other size districts regarding the benefits of long term district leadership relationships. Continuous studies on school leadership and factors affecting students' academic performance are needed to support the commitment of the United States' educators to quality education.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent: Superintendents

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University and invite you to participate in my doctoral research study. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA TO PARTICIPATE:
The qualifying criteria are:
1) 1A or 2A Texas school district

Background:
The purpose of this study is to investigate frequent superintendent turnover in 1A and 2A Texas school districts and the impact of the factors of trust in the superintendent position and personnel morale. The survey study is titled *Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale.* This is designed to determine if the frequent changes in district leadership creates issues for personnel and not issues of an individual superintendent or superintendents. The results will be used as a part of the researcher's doctoral study. The primary reason for conducting this study is to obtain data relating to the experiences of the district personnel and how they are impacted by the frequent superintendent turnovers. Additionally, the information obtained from this study may be used by school boards and superintendents to work toward better work relations while increasing the tenure of superintendents and stability in small Texas school districts.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that involves a series of questions regarding district demographics and the frequent superintendent turnover in your district. You may choose to any time not to answer any and all of the survey questions. After completing the survey, your answers will be stored in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base and will not contain any information that will allow for the identification of participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The on-line survey does not have any identifier questions, therefore, once your data is submitted, there will be no means of retracting your answers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no potential risks or benefits from the completion of this survey.

Payment:
There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include have access to your name or anything else that could identify

you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by www.SurveyMonkey.com. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The completed survey will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the combined survey responses. All survey responses will be kept in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project.

Contacts and Questions⸬
The researcher conducting this study is Edgar B. Camacho. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Stephanie Schmitz. Dr. Schmitz can be reached at _____. If you have any questions before you begin the study or once you begin the survey, you may contact Edgar B. Camacho at _____. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott. . If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.** This consent form is for your records and may be kept or discarded.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study. Consent signatures will not be collected, due to the fact that the surveys are completed at www.SurveyMonkey.com and no hard copies will be distributed or collected. Completion and submission of the survey will indicate an individual's consent to participate in this research study. If any individual does not wish to participate, please delete the email requesting participation.

If you agree to be part of this research project, I would ask that you click on the link below and proceed to answer the survey questions.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/1A2ASuperintendentSurvey2013

I also ask that you forward the personnel consent form to your district personnel via your district email.

If you prefer not to be involved in this study, that is not a problem at all. I ask that you delete this email, so that all information is discarded.

Your participation will be considered your approval and that I have cleared this data collection with you.

Sincerely,
Edgar B. Camacho

Researcher's Written or Electronic*

Signature

Edgar B Camacho (signature)

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Please cut and Paste the email subject title for the forwarded Personnel Request/Consent below:
Subject title: 1A and 2A Texas School Superintendent Turnover Survey

Delete the information above this line and forward the "Personnel Risks of Being in the Study" (via email) to your district personnel.

Appendix B: School District Superintendent Survey

Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale

Dear Superintendent,
My name is Edgar B. Camacho, and I am formerly a superintendent of two small Texas school districts. I enjoy working in the small school environment, because of the opportunity to work directly with the faculty and staff. I feel that working side-by-side with the faculty and staff allows for a better appreciation of each job responsibility that makes a school district function. One concern that I have, is the increasing number of superintendent turnovers in small Texas school districts and the influence that the changes may have on personnel morale and trust of the superintendent position. It is my goal to help school districts identify the need to develop good working relationships between the superintendent and stakeholders of small Texas school districts. The positive relationships may allow for longer tenures, in the superintendent position, and assist with higher levels of trust and morale. The increased understanding of the impact of multiple superintendent turnovers on personnel, will lead toward more research and an increased awareness of the impact on all personnel.
I am requesting that you answer this survey, one time, and share your opinion of how frequent changes in the superintendent position may or may not influence your level trust and morale. This survey is completely anonymous and all answers will be combined, so that no single participants answers can be identified.
I am also requesting that you allow your district personnel to participate in a separate survey that will require you to forward via district email.

Please answer each question, as it applies to your district:

1) What is the size of your current high school student population?
   o Less than 100
   o 100-150
   o 151-200
   o 201-250
   o 251-300
   o 301-350
   o 351-400
   o 401-429
2) What is the size of your current district according to the University Interscholastic League Definition?
   o 1A

- 2A

3) How many superintendents have served in your current district between the years of 2005-2011? _____

4) What is the total number of personnel (excluding you) in your current district?
    - Less than 50
    - 51-100
    - 101-150
    - 151-200
    - 200+

5) How many years have you served in your current district?
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5
    - 6
    - 7 or more years

6) Is this your first superintendency? Yes or No

7) If **NO** on #6, how many other districts have you served as a superintendent?

8)   If **YES** on #6, what was your position in your prior district?
Asst. Supt., Curriculum Director, Special Programs Director, Business Manager, High School Principal, Asst. High School Principal, High School Counselor, Middle School Principal, Asst. Middle school Principal, Middle School Counselor, Elementary Principal, Asst. Elementary Principal, Elementary Counselor, Other (If you answered other, What was the position? _____)

Personal Interaction with Personnel:

9) How often do you interact professionally with the current personnel (meetings or discussions over school matters)?
0-1 times per week
2-4 times per week
5-7 times per week
8 or more times per week

10) How often do you interact in a non-professional manner with the current
    personnel

(casual conversation or short greetings during the work day)?

0-1 times per week

2-4 times per week

5-7 times per week

8 or more times per week

11) How often do you physically walk through the separate campuses during the
    workday in your district?

0-1 times per week

2-4 times per week

5-7 times per week

8 or more times per week

12) How often do you physically walk though different school departments during
    the workday in your district?

0-1 times per week

2-4 times per week

5-7 times per week

8 or more times per week

13) How often do you attend the after hour's district functions?

0-1 times per week

2-4 times per week

5-7 times per week

8 or more times per week

**Organization Culture: Please rate the state of employee trust and morale in each
situation.**

14) What is your perception of the level of trust among the personnel?

High level of trust

Neutral level of trust

Low level of trust

15)What is your perception of the level of morale among the personnel?
High level of morale
Neutral level of morale
Low level of morale

16) To what do you attribute the level of trust, toward the superintendent position, among the personnel?
(Please choose all answers that you feel fit this question)
Frequent superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011
School board / superintendent conflicts
Using this district as a "stepping stone"
Personnel resistance to changes
Frequent superintendent retirements
Frequent personnel turnovers (certified and at-will)
District accountability scores from the state and federal government
Other _____
None of these choices apply to my district

17)To what do you attribute the level of morale among the personnel?
(Please choose all answers that you feel fit this question)
Frequent superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011
School board / superintendent conflicts
Using this district as a "stepping stone"
Personnel resistance to changes
Frequent superintendent retirements
Frequent personnel turnovers (certified and at-will)
District accountability scores from the state and federal government
Other _____
None of these choices apply to my district

Appendix C: Personnel Consent

Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale

Date: Spring 2013

Dear School District Employee,

I have obtained the superintendent's support to collect data for my research project entitled: **Frequent Superintendent Succession and the Impact on Small Texas School District Personnel Trust and Morale**.

I am requesting your cooperation in the data collection process. I propose to collect data this spring 2012 between the dates _____. I will coordinate the data collection via email and web link, in order to minimize disruption to your instructional activities.

Background:
The purpose of this study is to investigate frequent superintendent turnover in 1A and 2A Texas school districts and the impact of the factors of trust in the superintendent position and personnel morale. The survey study is titled *Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale.* This is designed to determine if the frequent changes in district leadership creates issues for personnel and **<u>not</u>** issues of an individual superintendent or superintendents. The results will be used as a part of the researcher's doctoral study. The primary reason for conducting this study is to obtain data relating to how your experiences, as an employee of the district, are impacted by the frequent superintendent turnovers. Additionally, the information obtained from this study may be used by school boards and superintendents to work toward better work relations while increasing the tenure of superintendents and stability in small Texas school districts.
This study is being conducted by Edgar B. Camacho, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. The student is a former superintendent of two small Texas school districts and has no professional relationship with the participants involved in the study.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that involves a series of statements regarding your opinion/attitude about the frequent turnover of superintendents in your district. You may choose to any time not to answer any and all of the survey questions. After completing the survey, your answers will be

stored in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base and will not contain any information that will allow for the identification of participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The on-line survey does not have any identifier questions, therefore, once your data is submitted, there will be no means of retracting your answers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no potential risks or benefits from the completion of this survey.
Payment:
There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.
Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include have access to your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by www.SurveyMonkey.com. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The completed survey will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the combined survey responses. All survey responses will be kept in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Edgar B. Camacho. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Stephanie Schmitz. Dr. Schmitz can be reached at _____.If you have any questions before you begin the study or once you begin the survey, you may contact Edgar B. Camacho at_____. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott. . If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.** This consent form is for your records and may be kept or discarded.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study. Consent signatures will not be collected, due to the fact that the surveys are completed at www.SurveyMonkey.com and no hard copies will be distributed or collected. Completion and submission of the survey will indicate an individual's consent to participate in

this research study. If any individual does not wish to participate, please delete the email requesting participation.

If you agree to be part of this research project, I would ask that you <u>click on the link below and proceed to answer the survey questions.</u>
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/1A2ASchoolPersonnel2013

If you prefer not to be involved in this study, that is not a problem at all. I ask that you delete this email, so that all information is discarded.

Your participation will be considered your approval and that I have cleared this data collection with you.

Sincerely,
Edgar B. Camacho

Researcher's Written or Electronic*

Signature

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix D: School District Personnel Survey

Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale

Individual Information - Personnel

Dear District Employee,

My name is Edgar B. Camacho, and I am formerly a superintendent of two small Texas school districts. I enjoy working in the small school environment, because of the opportunity to work directly with the faculty and staff. I feel that working side-by-side with the faculty and staff allows for a better appreciation of each job responsibility that makes a school district function. One concern that I have, is the increasing number of superintendent turnovers in small Texas school districts and the influence that the changes may have on personnel morale and trust of the superintendent position. It is my goal to help school districts identify the need to develop good working relationships between the superintendent and stakeholders of small Texas school districts. The positive relationships may allow for longer tenures, in the superintendent position, and assist with higher levels of trust and morale. The increased understanding of the impact of multiple superintendent turnovers on personnel, will lead toward more research and an increased awareness of the impact on all personnel.

I am requesting that you answer this survey, one time, and share your opinion of how frequent changes in the superintendent position may or may not influence your level trust and morale.

1. Which education service center is your district served by?

1 – Edinburg
2 - Corpus Christi
3 – Victoria
4 – Houston
5 – Beaumont
6 – Huntsville
7 – Kilgore
8 - Mount Pleasant
9 - Wichita Falls
10- Richardson
11- Fort Worth
12- Waco
13- Austin
14- Abilene

15- San Angelo
16- Amarillo
17- Lubbock
18- Midland
19- El Paso
20- San Antonio

2. Have you worked in your district between the years 2005-2011?

○ Yes

○ No

3. How many years have you worked in your current district?

○ 1-2

○ 3-4

○ 5-6

○ 7-8

○ 9-10

○ 10-14

○ 15-19

○ 20+

4. How many superintendents have you worked under, in your current district, between the years 2004-2010?

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6+

5. Have you worked in the current district at least 4 of the years between 2005-2011?

○ Yes

○ No

6. Gender:

○ Male

○ Female

○ Prefer not to answer

7. What is your current position in your district?

○ Central Office: Asst. Supt., Business Manager, PEIMS/Payroll Clerk, Secretary

○ Campus Administration: Principal, Asst. Principal
Campus Faculty: Counselor, Teacher,

○ Physical Plant: Maintenance, Transportation, Custodial, Grounds

○ Support Services: Nurse, Food Service, Aide, Secretary

8. Have you advanced or been promoted to another position between the years of 2005-2011?

○ Yes – Go to #9

○ No – Go to #10

9. If Yes, on number 8, which category below best fits the advancement/promotion:

○ Teacher to Department Head or Lead Teacher

○ Teacher to Counselor, Asst. Principal, Principal, or other administrative role

○ Asst. Principal to Principal

◉ Asst. Principal to Central Office

○ Principal to Central Office

○ Support Services position to a Support Services Director position

10. Do you feel the turnover in superintendents between the years 2005-2011 helped you to advance?

○ Yes

◉ No

11. If you answered "YES" on #10, which category below best fits your situation:

○ Other personnel left the district and you were moved into the position.

○ Other personnel left the district and you applied for and advanced into the position.

○ New administration made personnel changes and you were moved into the position.

12. If you answered "NO" on #10, which category below best fits your situation:

○ There have not been any opportunities to advance

○ New administration brought in new employees to fill open positions

○ You did not seek advancement when positions opened

o   My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011, which would have created opportunities.

Personal Interaction with current and past superintendents:
The following questions are intended to determine how much personal time that each individual interacted with the superintendent(s).

13. How often do you interact professionally with the current superintendent (meetings or discussions over school matters)?

○ 0-1 times per week

○ 2-4 times per week

○ 5-7 times per week

○ 8 or more times per week

14. How often do you interact in a non-professional manner with the current superintendent (casual conversation or short greetings during the work day)?

○ 0-1 times per week

○ 2-4 times per week

○ 5-7 times per week

○ 8 or more times per week

15. How often do you physically see the superintendent during the workday on your campus?

○ 0-1 times per week

○ 2-4 times per week

○ 5-7 times per week

○ 8 or more times per week

16. How often do you see the superintendent traveling around the district?

○ 0-1 times per week

○ 2-4 times per week

○ 5-7 times per week

○ 8 or more times per week

17. How often do you see the superintendent speaking with other employees around the district?

○ 0-1 times per week

○ 2-4 times per week

○ 5-7 times per week

○ 8 or more times per week

18. How often do you see the superintendent after hours at district functions?

○ 0-1 times per week

○ 2-4 times per week

○ 5-7 times per week

○ 8 or more times per week

The Influence of the Superintendent on Your Trust and Morale of the Position: Definitions:

Trust- The exchanges among members of a community and their common understanding of the obligations and expectations inherent in their organizational roles (Byrk & Schneider, 2003, p.41; Coburn & Russell, 2008, p.207).

Morale- "The relative mental/emotional valence of positive or negative energy of an individual or of a group of individuals (as in a school staff)" (p.173) (Meyer, MacMillan, and Northfield, 2009).

This section is designed to determine how the interaction or lack of interaction, with the superintendent(s), impacts your trust and morale.

19. Do you feel that you can share your opinion with the current superintendent?

○ Yes

No opinion

○ No

20. Do the frequent turnovers keep you from making efforts to develop a relationship with the superintendent?

○ Yes

○ No Opinion

○ No

o My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011.

21. How do you think that the frequent superintendent turnovers have made your current work situation:

o Better

o No difference

o Worse

    o   My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011.

22. The frequent turnover of superintendents makes you feel positive about your job? (morale)

    o   Yes
    o   No opinion
    o   No
    o   My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011.

23. The frequent turnover of superintendents make you feel positive about the position of the district? (morale)

    ○   Yes

    ○   No opinion

    ○   No

24. Do you believe that you can rely on this superintendent to make positive changes in the district? (trust)

    ○   Yes

    ○   No opinion

    ○   No

25. You have a high level of trust in the superintendent position? (trust)

    ○   Yes

    ○   No opinion

    ○   No

26. Do you feel that having a superintendent for a longer period of time (four or more years) would help **you** to develop a relationship with the superintendent? (trust)

    ○   Yes

    ○   No opinion

    ○   No

27. Do you feel that having a superintendent for a longer period of time (four or more years) will help **you** to develop a positive level of trust with the superintendent? (trust)

    ○   Yes

    ○   No opinion

    ○   No

28. Do you feel that having a superintendent for a longer period of time (four or more years) will help **you** to develop a higher level of **personal** morale?

    ○   Yes

○ No opinion

○ No

29. Do you feel that having a superintendent for a longer period of time (four or more years) will help the **district** to develop a positive level of trust with the superintendent?

○ Yes

○ No opinion

○ No

30. Do you feel that having a superintendent for a longer period of time (four or more years) will help the **district personnel** to develop a higher level of personnel morale?

○ Yes

○ No opinion

○ No

31. What is **your** level of trust in the superintendent position, due to the frequent turnover of the superintendents between 2005-2011?

○ High

○ Somewhat high

○ Neutral

○ Somewhat low

○ Low

o My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011

32. What is **your** level of morale in your working position, due to the frequent superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011?

○ High

○ Somewhat high

○ Neutral

○ Somewhat low

○ Low

o My district has not experienced two or more superintendent turnovers between 2005-2011

Appendix E: Request to Forward Doctoral Study Letter

Dear Executive Director,

A research study of 1A and 2A Texas school districts is being proposed and your assistance forwarding general "Request to Participate" emails, to your region superintendents, is requested. The survey study is titled *Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale.* This study is being conducted by Edgar B. Camacho, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. The student is a former superintendent of two small Texas school districts and has no professional relationship with the participants involved in the study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate frequent superintendent turnover in 1A and 2A Texas school districts and the impact of the factors of trust in the superintendent position and personnel morale. This study is designed to determine if the frequent changes in district leadership creates issues for personnel and not issues of an individual superintendent or superintendents. The results will be used as a part of the researcher's doctoral study. The primary reason for conducting this study is to obtain data relating to the experiences of the district personnel and how they are impacted by the frequent superintendent turnovers. Additionally, the information obtained from this study may be used by school boards and superintendents to work toward better work relations while increasing the tenure of superintendents and stability in small Texas school districts.

I am requesting that you simply forward the initial request to all school districts, in your education region, and each district superintendent will determine if his/her school district qualifies to participate.
The qualifying criteria are:
1) 1A or 2A Texas school district

The Request to Participate letter (for superintendents) is attached to your email. I ask that you forward the attached letter to the superintendents of your education region.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Edgar B. Camacho. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Stephanie Schmitz. Dr. Schmitz can be reached at_____. If you have any questions before you forward the superintendent request, you may contact Edgar B. Camacho at_____. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott. . If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.** This consent form is for your records and may be kept or discarded.

Please cut and Paste the email subject title for the forwarded Superintendent Request below:
Subject title: 1A and 2A Texas School Superintendent Turnover Survey
Delete the information above this line and forward the Superintendent Risks of Being in the Study

Superintendent Risks of Being in the Study

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University and invite you to participate in my doctoral research study. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA TO PARTICIPATE:
The qualifying criteria are:
2) 1A or 2A Texas school district

Background:
The purpose of this study is to investigate frequent superintendent turnover in 1A and 2A Texas school districts and the impact of the factors of trust in the superintendent position and personnel morale. The survey study is titled *Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale.* This study is designed to determine if the frequent changes in district leadership creates issues for personnel and not issues of an individual superintendent or superintendents. The results will be used as a part of the researcher's doctoral study. The primary reason for conducting this study is to obtain data relating to the experiences of the district personnel and how they are impacted by the frequent superintendent turnovers. Additionally, the information obtained from this study may be used by school boards and superintendents to work toward better work relations while increasing the tenure of superintendents and stability in small Texas school districts.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that involves a series of questions regarding district demographics and the frequent superintendent turnover of in your district. You may choose to any time not to answer any and all of the survey questions. After completing the survey, your answers will be stored in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base and will not contain any information that will allow for the identification of participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The on-line survey does not have any identifier questions, therefore, once your data is submitted, there will be no means of retracting your answers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no potential risks or benefits from the completion of this survey.

Payment:
There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include have access to your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by www.SurveyMonkey.com. Data

will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The completed survey will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the combined survey responses. All survey responses will be kept in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project.

Contacts and Questions：

The researcher conducting this study is Edgar B. Camacho. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Stephanie Schmitz. Dr. Schmitz can be reached at _____.If you have any questions before you begin the study or once you begin the survey, you may contact Edgar B. Camacho at_____. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott. . If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.** This consent form is for your records and may be kept or discarded.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study. Consent signatures will not be collected, due to the fact that the surveys are completed at www.SurveyMonkey.com and no hard copies will be distributed or collected. Completion and submission of the survey will indicate an individual's consent to participate in
this research study. If any individual does not wish to participate, please delete the email requesting participation.

If you agree to be part of this research project, I would ask that you click on the link below and proceed to answer the survey questions.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/1A2ASuperintendentSurvey2013

I also ask that you forward the **"Personnel Risks of Being in the Study"** to your district personnel via your district email.

If you prefer not to be involved in this study, that is not a problem at all. I ask that you delete this email, so that all information is discarded.
Your participation will be considered your approval and that I have cleared this data collection with you.

Sincerely,
Edgar B. Camacho

Researcher's Written or Electronic*

Signature

Edgar B Camacho

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Please cut and Paste the email subject title for the forwarded Personnel Risks of Being in the Study below:
Subject title: 1A and 2A Texas School Superintendent Turnover Survey

Delete the information above this line and forward the "Personnel Risks of Being in the Study" (via email) to your district personnel.

Personnel Risks of Being in the Study

<u>Date: Spring 2013</u>

Dear School District Employee,

I have obtained the superintendent's support to collect data for my research project entitled: **Frequent Superintendent Succession and the Impact on Small Texas School District Personnel Trust and Morale**.

I am requesting your cooperation in the data collection process. I propose to collect data this spring 2012 between the dates _____. I will coordinate the data collection via email and web link, in order to minimize disruption to your instructional activities.

Background:
The purpose of this study is to investigate frequent superintendent turnover in 1A and 2A Texas school districts and the impact of the factors of trust in the superintendent position and personnel morale. The survey study is titled *Frequent Superintendent Turnover in Small Texas School Districts and the Impact on Personnel Trust and Morale.* This is designed to determine if the frequent changes in district leadership creates issues for personnel and **<u>not</u>** issues of an individual superintendent or superintendents. The results will be used as a part of the researcher's doctoral study. The primary reason for conducting this study is to obtain data relating to how your experiences, as an employee of the district, are impacted by the frequent superintendent turnovers. Additionally, the information obtained from this study may be used by school boards and superintendents to work toward better work relations while increasing the tenure of superintendents and stability in small Texas school districts.
This study is being conducted by Edgar B. Camacho, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. The student is a former superintendent of two small Texas school districts and has no professional relationship with the participants involved in the study.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that involves a series of statements regarding your opinion/attitude about the frequent turnover of superintendents in your district. You may choose to any time not to answer any and all of the survey questions. After completing the survey, your answers will be stored in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base and will not contain any information that will allow for the identification of participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The on-line survey does not have any identifier questions, therefore, once your data is submitted, there will be no means of retracting your answers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no potential risks or benefits from the completion of this survey.
Payment:
There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.
Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include have access to your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by www.SurveyMonkey.com. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The completed survey will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the combined survey responses. All survey responses will be kept in the www.SurveyMonkey.com data base. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Edgar B. Camacho. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Stephanie Schmitz. Dr. Schmitz can be reached at_____. If you have any questions before you begin the study or once you begin the survey, you may contact Edgar B. Camacho at_____. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott. . If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.** This consent form is for your records and may be kept or discarded.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study. Consent signatures will not be collected, due to the fact that the surveys are completed at www.SurveyMonkey.com and no hard copies will be distributed or collected. Completion and submission of the survey will indicate an individual's consent to participate in
this research study. If any individual does not wish to participate, please delete the email requesting participation.

If you agree to be part of this research project, I would ask that you click on the link below and proceed to answer the survey questions.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/1A2ASchoolPersonnel2013

you prefer not to be involved in this study, that is not a problem at all. I ask that you delete this email, so that all information is discarded.

Your participation will be considered your approval and that I have cleared this data collection with you.

Sincerely,
Edgar B. Camacho

Researcher's Written or Electronic*****

Signature

Edgar B Camacho

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix F: Power Analysis
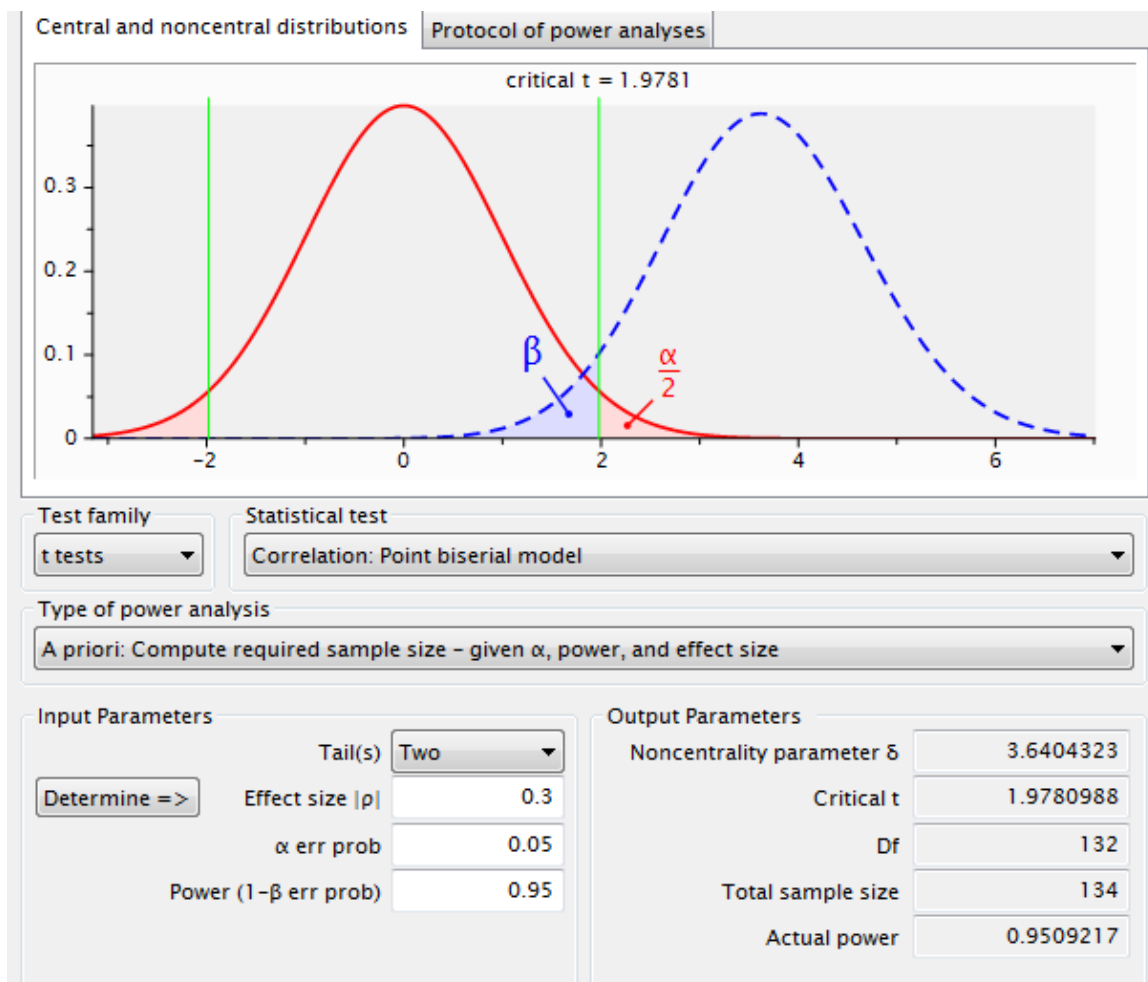
Appendix G: Curriculum Vitae

Master's Degree in Physical Education, Specialization in Exercise Science, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, August 1996

Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education, Minor in Biology, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, May 1990

<u>**Licenses and Certificates**</u>:
- Superintendent Certification, Southwest Texas State University, 2000 - 2001
- Mid-Management Certification, CACP Program, Education Service Center, Region XIII, 1997 - 1999
- State of Texas Teachers Certification: (Physical Education, Secondary; Biology, Secondary; Health, Secondary)
- Commercial Drivers License, Texas School Bus Driver Certification
- FEMA- National Incident Management Systems Certification

Employment:

Hondo ISD   2012-Present

Vibra-Tech, Inc.   2012

Field Technician

Abilene ISD   2011-2012

Substitute teacher

Baird ISD   2008-2011

Superintendent

Freer ISD   2003-2007

Superintendent

LULING INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT   1992–2003

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT/SPECIAL PROGRAMS DIRECTOR/ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SPECIAL PROGRAMS / HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER AND COACH / JUNIOR HIGH TEACHER AND COACH

LOCKHART INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT   1990–1991

JUNIOR HIGH TEACHER AND COACH