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Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Administrator Support, Teacher Retention, and Attrition

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MSE, Virginia State University, 2007

BS, St. Paul's College, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Teacher attrition has been an issue in the local urban area resulting in students being taught by teachers and substitutes who may not be knowledgeable about the content. The attrition of experienced teachers is a concern for administrators, fellow teachers, parents, and students. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and teacher attrition. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory served as the conceptual framework that guided this study. A basic qualitative research design was used to capture the insights of 10 middle school teachers in an urban district in the eastern United States through interviews. The research questions addressed middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, why teachers leave a school, and why teachers stay at a school. Emergent ideas and patterns were identified through open coding then organized into meaningful themes. Trustworthiness was established through member checking, reflexivity, and rich and detailed descriptions. The findings revealed that teachers leave a school due to a lack of administrator support such as lack of emotional support, instructional support, help with student behavior, sufficient resources, and positive school climate, but the teachers would remain at their schools if they received these supports from their administrators. This study may influence positive social change by suggesting ways administrators and school district officials can increase teacher retention in schools locally and nationally.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Teachers are leaving the profession at high rates nationally and locally. Forty-four percent of teachers are leaving within their first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2018). In Washington, DC, teachers are leaving because of work demands and lack of support, creating a concern for the DC Board of Education (Adnot et al., 2016; Kaplan, 2019). One issue is that teachers' perceptions of support may differ from the actual support that is provided by the administrators. Teachers have indicated that support involves sharing teaching resources, cooperative teaching and planning, offsite discussions about classroom management, programming with mentors, and having a professional voice (Burke et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2015). However, teachers and principals may have different perceptions of support. Teacher attrition can be reduced with a universal meaning of support and what that support looks like from a teacher's perspective (Algozzine & Hancock, 2016; Burke et al., 2015; Epling, 2015). Being aware of the specific support needed for early career teachers can lead to positive results such as teacher retention, efficacy, and student learning (Burke et al., 2015; Oke et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2015; Tesheen et al., 2015). These specific supports can create strategies for administrators to reduce teacher attrition across states. For instance, emotional, environmental, and instructional support from principals has significantly influenced teacher retention in schools (Hughes et al., 2015).

This study is needed because there is little research about the specific supports middle school teachers think they need and want from their administrators and how these supports may assist with lessening teacher attrition. The potential social change from this

study involves creating an understanding of teachers' perceptions of specific support needed to retain teachers. The major sections in Chapter 1 are Background, Problem Statement, Purpose of Study, Research Questions, Conceptual Framework, Nature of Study, Definitions, Assumptions, Scope and Delimitations, Limitations, Significance, and Summary.

Background

Teacher attrition is an ongoing issue in many districts across the United States. Novice teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching (Campbell, 2019; Dee & Goldhaber 2017; Foley 2018; Loeb & Myung, 2020; Redding & Henry, 2019; Strauss, 2017; Whipp & Geronime, 2017), and 44% of novice teachers are leaving their jobs (Ingersoll, 2018). These issues are happening across the United States (Redding & Henry, 2019). Due to teacher turnover, 4.9 billion dollars was spent to close the gap of teacher retention (Liu, 2019; Sorensen, 2020).

Researchers investigating teachers' intentions of leaving their teaching positions have identified various reasons for teacher attrition. The reasons include but are not limited to culture and climate issues, poor facilities, added responsibilities, lack of resources, and administrator support (Howes & Goodman, 2015; McKinney et al., 2014; Reese, 2019; Sam et al., 2014; Simon et al., 2015; Sutcher et al., 2016; Torres, 2016). In particular, research shows that for teachers to remain at their schools, administrators must provide teachers with adequate support (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Administrator support is important to teachers, as they want to feel valued at their schools (Hughes et

al., 2015). For this study, administrators and principals were used interchangeably as some studies report administrator information and others report about principals.

Support consists of many avenues other than instruction like communication, emotional support, environmental support, along with instructional support. Teachers who intended to remain at their school or in the profession viewed support as having conversations and observations from the experienced teachers in their building (Hughes et al., 2015). Other ideas of support include positive feedback, ongoing communication, maintenance of a positive climate and culture, along with creating a collaborative principal–teacher relationship (Burke et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2016; Hughes et al., 2015). These types of support presented by administrators can bring about a positive change within schools (Burke, 2015; Campbell, 2017; 2016; Hughes et al., 2015). Novice teachers also need support in pedagogy and content knowledge, ongoing positive feedback, classroom management strategies, mentorship, and consistent communication from administrators (Burke et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2016; Hughes et al., 2015; McKinney et al., 2014; Simon et al., 2015; Sutcher et al., 2016; Torres, 2016).

Though support is important to retaining teachers, teachers' perceptions of support differ from administrator ideas of support (Burke et al., 2015). Teachers who intended to leave have indicated that support is sharing teaching resources, cooperative teaching and planning, offsite discussions about classroom management and programming with mentors, and having a professional voice (Burke et al., 2015). Conversely, principals perceived support as assisting teachers instructionally. Further,

principals may feel that they were providing instructional support their teachers needed when teachers did not feel the same way (Hughes et al., 2015).

Being aware of the specific support needed for early career teachers or novice teachers can lead to positive results such as teacher retention, sense of self-efficacy, and student learning (Burke et al., 2015). Without retaining teachers, high attrition rates will increase the shortage of teachers (Foley 2018; Redding & Henry, 2019). Retaining teachers can maintain more effective instruction and create less disruption. But more research is needed to understand specific and effective strategies that will support and retain teachers (Podolsky et al., 2016; Vittek, 2015). This study addressed this gap in practice by identifying specific strategies needed for teachers to be retained and addressing the concerns of teacher turnover in schools.

Problem Statement

The research problem addressed in this study is the high rate of teacher attrition, which has been an issue for many years in the United States. Thirteen percent of the nation's 3.4 million teachers change schools or leave the profession every year (McInery et al., 2015). The Department of Education estimated that states would need an overwhelming number of new teachers in public and private school districts nationwide each year (Cheng, 2019; Morrison, 2012). Figure 1 shows that teachers are also leaving the schools or positions at a high rate in the DC area, especially middle schools (Kaplan, 2019). The Washington DC area reported that the national average attrition rate for teachers is 16% (District of Columbia State Board of Education, 2018). These shortages will exist until the issue of teacher retention is addressed (Cheng, 2019; Morrison, 2012).

Figure 1

Highest Teacher Attrition in Washington, DC 2014–2015 to 2017–2018
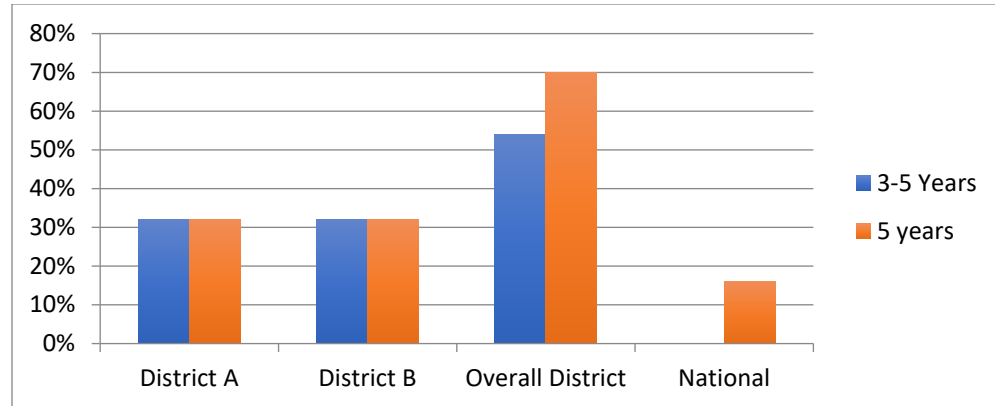
Note. Data retrieved from https://www.sboe.dc.gov

Researchers have substantiated various reasons showing why retaining teachers is difficult (Campbell, 2019; Conley, 2017; Hughes, 2015; Wilkins, 2014). The reasons for teacher attrition include teacher salaries, working conditions, and lack of support from administrators or school leaders (DeAngelis, 2013; Hughes, 2015; Jones, 2017). This pattern is also occurring in the local setting of Washington, DC. In DC, 36% of teachers exited the school system because of "unsupportive leadership" (Adnot et al., 2016, p. 7). No matter how many years of experience a teacher may have, all teachers need specific supports that will aid in retention such as emotional, environmental, and instructional support (Hughes et al., 2015). Administrator support with induction programs and mentors can help prepare teachers for the challenges they face in the classroom and school (Campbell, 2017; Carre, 2020; Ingersoll, 2018). Though research has showed various reasons for teacher attrition, there is a gap in research about the essence of support. Thus, more research is needed to determine information about specific strategies

administrators can encourage that will help with retaining teachers (Podolsky et al., 2016; Vittek, 2015). This study investigated the needed support for teachers in order to address the gap in practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this of basic qualitative study was to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher attrition, and teacher retention. Administrator support can be interpreted in many ways such as classroom management, providing mentors or individual support for novice teachers, communication with teachers, providing teachers with feedback, and making personal connections with teachers (Burke, 2015; Hughes, 2015; Ingersoll, 2018; Vittek, 2015; Zang, 2016). Thus, it was important to explore perceptions of support so administrators and teachers can work to increase teacher retention in their schools (see Epling, 2016; Fischer & Royster, 2016; Grant, 2017).

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do middle school teachers describe administrator support?

Research Question 2: What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers leave their positions?

Research Question 3: What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers stay in their positions?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this research was based on

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner suggested that his

environment influences an individual. He separated an individual's environment into five

systems: microsystem (individual surroundings), macrosystem (culture of individual's

environment), mesosystem (a link between two microsystems), exosystem (their setting),

and chronosystem (individual's lifetime experience). Teachers are a part of an

educational system, and this system influences them just like a child can be influenced by

their environment (Brownell & Smith, 1993). Teachers can be influenced by the culture

of their school and administrators are the leaders of the culture of the schools.

Bronfenbrenner's theory informed this study by thinking how teachers are exposed to

different environments over a period that can influence their behaviors, which applied to

middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and

attrition. Further discussion of middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator

support, teacher retention, and attrition as well as the framework for this study is

presented in Chapter 2.

Nature of Study

I investigated administrator support related to teacher retention, and attrition, as

ideas vary about what administrator support is, looked like, and what kind of support

middle school teachers might appreciate. Thus, I used a basic qualitative study design. A

basic qualitative study is a study that not only focuses on the beliefs, attitudes, or

opinions of participants but also focuses on the experiences, what the experiences mean,

and the "transformation" from participants' experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Patton; 2015; Thorne, 2016). The basic qualitative study is also used when the researcher wants to better understand or describe an issue or topic through the perspectives of a group of individuals' real-world experiences. Further, the basic qualitative design is befitting for research in an educational environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This design allowed me to be flexible and practical with addressing participants' experiences (Caelli, Ray, and Mill, 2003; Kahlke, 2014; Merriam et al., 2015, Sandelowski, 2000; Thorne, 2016; Twinning et al., 2017).

In this study, the only sources of data were interviews conducted in two parts: demographic questions and open-ended questions. Collecting data through interviews helped with understanding, explaining, and investigating the phenomenon. I used semistructured questions as opposed to close-ended questions to engage the participants in a discussion rather than following an interview format of just asking and responding to questions. Semistructured questions provide opportunities for a participant to expand on their ideas and provide valuable information that cannot be quantified (Kallio et al., 2016). This structure also helped with providing demographic information about the participant, years of teaching experience, and educational background. I purposely selected 10 of the first eligible respondents for individual interviews by sending out a participant letter via Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn of those who met the criteria. I analyzed the data qualitatively using open coding to capture emerging ideas, and then categorized ideas to develop themes (Saldana, 2015). Further explanation of the research design and methodology used for this study is in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Administrator: An overseer of the daily operations of a school (Combee, 2014; Conley 2017). For this study, an administrator may be a principal, assistant principal. or a superintendent.

Administrative support: Assistance from leaders/administrators in a school to help strengthen or to aid in the development of teachers in the areas of classroom management and instruction (Combee, 2014; Epling, 2016).

Mentorship: Leaders within the profession who provide assistance, guidance, and can be a role model for novice teachers (Gjedia, & Gardinier, 2018).

Teacher attrition: Teachers leaving the profession before retirement or teachers transferring from one school to the next (Mason & Matsas, 2015; Semarco & Cho, 2018)

Teacher burnout: When teachers experience personal frustrations due to the stresses of the job resulting in failure to perform successfully (Betoret, 2006; Jacobs, 2016; McLean et al., 2019; Smetackova, 2017).

Teacher retention: When teachers choose to remain at their present position due to possible contributing factors such as administrative support, demographics, and school characteristics affect the decision of teachers staying or leaving the profession (Hughes et al., 2015).

Assumptions

An assumption in this study was that teachers provided honest and thorough responses to interviews. I also assumed that the participants had a sincere interest in participating in the research study. Assumptions are necessary for this study so that

findings of interviews can inform understanding of the reasons for staying or leaving a setting.

Scope and Delimitations

One of the reasons for teachers leaving their schools or the profession altogether is due to the lack of administrator support (Burke et al., 2015, Hughes et al., 2015). This specific focus was chosen because teacher attrition is a concern across the United States (Hill, 2017; Wilkins, 2014). This research study aided in exploring the supports needed from administrators to retain teachers.

The delimitation of this study is that only middle school teachers in an urban setting of Washington, DC, participated in the study. Other school levels were excluded from this study in Washington, DC. A sample size of 10 participants was used to gather rich, detailed information. The findings in this study are explained thoroughly so readers can transfer the information to their own experience or situation.

Limitations

Limitations in this study may include time, participants opting out of in-person interviews, and issues with the type of equipment used when recording responses. I anticipated that some participants would have limited time to complete interviews in one session due to their busy schedules. To prevent this from happening, I provided an option for participants to complete the interview in its entirety in one setting or complete the interview in two sessions. Another limitation could be participants opting out to do interviews in person. The solution that I provided was to conduct interviews over the phone using Skype, Facetime, or Zoom with a chosen time slot by the participants. If

participants were interviewed over the phone, I ensured that there was a good quality conference call speaker available and a good quality recorder along with backups to capture the responses clearly.

Additional limitations could be biases based on the geographical setting of middle school teachers in Washington, DC. To maintain objectivity and avoid biases, I chose the first 10 participants who responded to the letter of invitation. This study had a sample size of a minimum of 10 teachers and was limited to middle schools in an urban setting. A larger sample sizes may differ in topic results. In addition, the teachers in this study were limited to an urban middle school setting. Due to being in urban school districts, administrator support and teacher retention views may differ from a rural or suburban setting.

Significance

According to the Every Student Succeed Act, schools are responsible for creating their own goals for English language learners, graduation, and standardized testing (Klein, 2016). These mandates have led to increased accountability and anxiety associated with stringent student testing and federal sanctions for schools (Neely, 2015). School administrators have many responsibilities that they must manage and prioritize to lead effectively. This study is significant because research has found positive correlations between effective leadership and teachers' perceptions that the administrators' leadership styles influenced their reasons for leaving or satisfaction with schools (Ji & Kawatra, 2016; Maele et al., 2015). Leadership styles of administrators play a great role in teacher

retention (Oke et al., 2016). In this study, I identified middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator supports needed to retain teachers at their schools.

Summary

Teacher attrition has been an issue for many years. There are several reasons why teachers decide to leave their school or the profession altogether (Lindqvist et al., 2016). One reason is the lack of administrator support (Hughes et al., 2015), which can contribute to low student performance, a change in the school culture, and hiring less qualified teachers (Lambeth, 2012; Lindqvist et al., 2016). The framework that guided this research is Bronfenbrenner's (1977) work on the ecological model, which is related to individuals being influenced by their environmental surroundings. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. Further information is provided in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teacher attrition is a significant problem locally and nationally. Teacher salaries, poor working conditions, and the lack of support from administrators or school leaders can lead to issues with teacher retention (Burke et al., 2015; DeAngelis, 2013; Hughes et al., 2015; Perryman & Calvert, 2019). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. The major sections in Chapter 2 are Literature Search Strategy, Conceptual Framework, Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts, and Summary.

Literature Search Strategy

For the purpose of this literature review, the following databases were used: Google Scholar, SAGE, Education Source, Academic Search Complete, Thoreau Multi-Database, Science Direct, Research Gate, Taylor & Francis Online, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Education Commission of the States, Education Source, ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research Datasets), PsycINFO, Scholar Works, SocINDEX, and EBSCOhost Online Research Databases. The key search terms used for this review included the following: *education*, *middle school teacher, attrition, retention, administration, administrator, administrator support, mentorship, job satisfaction,* and *burnout*. Additionally, I used the primitive search terms of *teacher retention*, *teacher attrition*, and *administrator support* for literature. Other terms that were used to search for literature about teacher retention, administrator support, and attrition along with the databases were: *school culture*, *lack of teacher support*, teacher *mentors, novice teachers, teachers and leaders, teacher turnover,* and *teacher feedback*.

The following terms were used with the following databases: *teacher retention*, *teachers*, and *leaders* in Education Commission of the States, Scholar Works; *teacher support* in Education Source; *teacher attrition*, *teacher retention*, *administrator support*, *teacher mentors*, and *lack of teacher support* in Scholar Works; *novice teachers* and *teacher turnover* in PsycINFO, and *teacher feedback* in Google Scholar, Scholar Works, and SAGE. These search terms and combinations yielded studies that were considered relevant to the problem. Most of the studies included in this review of the literature were published between 2015 and 2020 to ensure that the studies were aligned to the current atmosphere of schools, faculty retention and attrition, and administrator support. However, older articles were used as references for the theoretical framework of the study and for explaining the fundamental concepts to reflect seminal studies on the items to be discussed.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that provided the lens for this research was Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner indicated that a child's development is based on the surrounding environment within five systems: microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is the immediate surroundings in which children exist or lives and includes relationships with families, school, peers, communities, and work (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Thus, the microsystem for teachers would be the classroom. The mesosystem is linked to relationships between two or more microsystems over the lifetime of an individual such as connections between peers and family (Bronfenbrenner, 1977;

Saakinen et al., 1994). For teachers, the mesosystem represents the students, parents,

coworkers, and administrators. Bronfenbrenner's exosystem is the linkage that consists of

two or more of the other settings in which an individual is not involved, but the

individual's development is impacted. The exosystem for teachers would be the school

board. The macrosystem is the culture of an individual's environment. The culture

includes the beliefs and values of an individual, and these components can influence an

individual environment positively or negatively. The teacher's culture of the school

climate would be the macrosystem. Finally, the chronosystem is the transition and shifts

of life events of an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The chronosystem rests the

inquiry of the decisions of teachers leaving or staying at their schools and the reasons for

their decisions.

      Researchers have applied the ecological model to related topics of teachers and

school reform. Brownell and Smith (1993) studied teacher attrition and retention of

special education teachers and the variables that affected teacher attrition and their

interrelationships. The researchers suggested that the work environment factors of low

salaries, lack of administrator support, and poor climate could lead to high stress levels

and low levels of commitment to the job. Thus, the mentioned factors influenced the

environment of the special educators negatively. Jeynes (2015) also applied the

ecological theory to examine economics, political, social, cultural, and organizational

viewpoints to evaluate school reform. The exosystem represented the systematic trends at

individual schools due to the budget cuts at the national and state levels. The budget cuts

influenced staff morale negatively and caused a hindrance to the reform. The

macrosystem of the study represented the shared norms and values, and the results showed a decline in school culture and climate. The mesosystem described the interactions across organizations. The analysis explained the lack of teamwork across organizations and resulted in a strain of the reform.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological system theory provided a structure for this study to describe and better understand how surrounding environments can influence teachers' lives. The idea of these systems was applied to the environmental situations of middle school teachers. The following sections in this chapter include the literature review and summary.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

In this section the key variables and concepts were originated from the literature review and assembled to relate to the problem and purpose of study. The key variables and concepts included in this section are teacher attrition and teacher retention, administrator support, teacher recognition, instructional and environmental support, emotional support, mentorship and induction programs, teacher burnout, student behavior, and school culture. This section concludes with a summary of the literature review.

Teacher Attrition and Teacher Retention

Attrition in the educational field is costly at a national level because it affects the federal budget and the social and academic outcomes of its citizens (Mason et al., 2015). Teacher attrition refers to teachers who leave the profession before retirement (Semarco et al., 2018). Further, turnover has been defined as the voluntary movement of an

individual across the membership boundary of an organization, which is the result of the decision of an employee to leave the organization (Corda et al., 2016). This indicates that teacher attrition, or turnover, can refer to teacher transfer to a different school as well as leaving the profession—both result in disruption of teaching services.

Attrition is an issue that is occurring around the globe and teachers are not remaining at their schools for various reasons. Thirteen percent of the nation's 3.4 million teachers change schools or leave the profession every year (McFarland et al., 2018). In the United States, 157,000 teachers leave the job every year, and 232,000 transfer to another school (Sutcher et al., 2016). Movers, or those who transfer, make up 12% of the teacher workforce, and retirees make up about 16% of the workforce, which increases concerns about retention as retirees exit the profession (Gray et al., 2015). Teacher attrition has been found to be particularly high in the early phases of the teaching career (Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Semarco & Cho, 2018), potentially due to stress (Harmsen et al., 2018). The Department of Education estimated that the nation needs over 2 million new teachers in public and private school districts nationwide each year (Adnot et al., 2016). Thus, teacher attrition is a national phenomenon that requires the attention of all stakeholders (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Sam, Effah, & Osei-Owusu, 2014). Attrition has been a concern for many years, and policymakers at the state and federal levels continue to search for the reasons novice teachers leave the profession (Foley 2018; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Redding & Henry, 2019; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014).

Teacher turnover harms school quality when measured through student performance (Adnot et al., 2016). Teacher turnover negatively impacts the quality of

learning, particularly in classrooms serving low-income students in high-income

countries and even more so in low-income countries (Ávalos et al., 2016, Kamrath &

Gregg, 2018). Students experience a great loss when teachers leave minority, low

socioeconomic areas mid-year, which affects academic success (Goldhaber et al., 2015;

Lankford et al., 2002; Redding & Henry, 2019). High turnover rates weaken the stable

cohesion of the school's workforce, impacting the school's efforts on instructional

programs and forcing schools to staff their faculty with short-term substitute teachers

(Corda et al., 2016). These factors could lead to perceptibly low quality of instruction

from the point of view of the students, which could be detrimental to their learning

experience (Corda et al., 2016). Additionally, teacher turnover puts a burden on the

financial capability of schools by forcing them to allocate resources to hiring, recruiting,

and training and preventing the school from investing those resources.

Studies substantiate various reasons for difficulties in teacher retention. There is

no one factor that can explain teacher attrition or retention, but there are a variety of

factors that play a role in teacher attrition. Factors can range from individual to

institutional. Individual factors that contribute to attrition include retirement, discipline

among teachers, bad experiences with teaching, and illnesses, among many others,

whereas institutional factors range from poor working conditions, transfer policies,

discipline policies, poor remuneration, availability of job opportunities in other areas, and

inadequate supervision (Oke et al., 2016; Mulei et al., 2016). Contextual factors have also

affected teachers' decisions such as student discipline issues, lack of input in decision-

making processes, and lack of perceived administrator support (Lindqvist & Nordanger,

2016). Other reported reasons for teacher attrition include schools with high poverty,

populations mainly comprised of minority students, stressful work conditions, discipline

problems, poor student motivation, vast student diversity, limited resources, and lack of

support from administrators or school leaders (Anderson, 2019; Conley, 2017; Jones &

Watson, 2017; Nordanger, 2015; Talley, 2017; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). The student–

teacher relationship can also influence teacher decisions about their jobs (Admiraal et al.,

2019; Fransson et al., 2016). The support and the professional relationships among

students, peers, and administrators have a great impact on teachers making the decision to

leave or stay at their jobs (Kelchtermans, 2017; Newberry et al., 2017).

Though teachers cite multiple reasons for their decision to leave a school or the

profession, the lack of support from administrators is a critical factor in teacher attrition

(Burke et al., 2015; Hicks, 2016; Hughes et al., 2015; Thibodeaux, 2015; Torres, 2016;

Wu, 2016). Due to a perceived lack of support from administrators, many teachers opt to

transfer to other schools or leave the profession altogether (Campoli, 2017; Craig, 2014;

James & McAbee, 2020; Lindqvist & Nördanger, 2016; Perryman & Calvert, 2019;

Sutcher & Hammond, 2016). Teachers have several responsibilities, which can

sometimes cause stress and anxiety, and they may rely on the encouragement of their

administrators for feelings of teacher self-efficacy and esteem (Campbell, 2019; Farris,

2018; Foley, 2018; Mahler & Harms, 2017; Talley, 2017). Without this, teachers are

more likely to leave their positions, which could affect student performance (Adnot et al.,

2016). Consistency and stability within the school is essential regarding student learning

(Papay et al., 2017). changes in curriculum, technology, materials, and staff have an

impact on the routine and support systems that students build in schools (Hong et al., 2019; Young, 2018). Therefore, teacher attrition is vital to consistency within school climate and culture and subsequent student performance. Providing teachers with the support they need so that they can be successful in the classroom reduces teacher attrition (Burke, 2015; Hughes et al., 2015; Rezsonya et al., 2019; Ulferts, 2016; Zang, 2016). Therefore, providing support for novice educators at all levels of school engagement is essential (Kraft et al., 2015; Phillip, 2019).

Administrator Support

Administrator support can be defined as the extent to which principals and other school leaders contribute to making teachers' work easier and assist them in improving their skills (Hill, 2017). Administrator support refers to the school's effectiveness in helping and supporting teachers with student discipline, curriculum, instructional methods, and adjustment to the school's culture and environment (Tehseen et al., 2015). Administrator support is an essential component of school leadership practices. It includes building the vision of the school, development of specific goals and priorities, offering individualized support, and the development of collaborative school culture (Tehseen et al., 2015).

Four categories of administrator support can make a difference in teachers' decisions to stay: emotional, instrumental, instructional, and technical support (Hughes et al., 2015). Emotional support occurs when administrators have open communication and show appreciation, respect, or interest in their teachers' work, and emotional well-being. Instrumental support occurs when administrators provide the resources that teachers need

and directly work with teachers to build instruments of successful instruction. For example, administrators can create an action plan that may equip teachers in dealing with difficult parents, classroom management, and supporting day-to-day frustrations. Instructional support provides instructional feedback to improve classroom practices and management skills, along with a strategic plan to eliminate stress and burnout (Lochmiller et al., 2016; Matiang'i, et al., 2017; Smetackova, 2017). Administrators lead the way for creating a supportive environment for teachers.

Administrative support is also one of the main factors for reducing turnover intentions among teachers (Burke et al., 2015; Epling; 2016; Helms, 2017; Hughes et al., 2015). Teachers who intended to leave shared that teaching resources, cooperative teaching and planning, offsite discussions about classroom management, programming with mentors, and having a greater professional voice were supports they needed (Burke et al., 2015). However, principals may feel as if they were providing support that teachers needed (Hughes et al., 2015). Thus, teachers and principals have different perceptions of support.

Teachers' Perspective of Support

Feelings of neglect from administrators could lead to feelings of doubt among teachers (Hill, 2017). But the perspectives of administrator support could vary between the teacher and the administrator (Koonkongsation, 2017). There are certain scenarios when administrators would believe they are giving the proper amount of support to their teachers, but the teachers did not feel that they were supported. For instance, novice teachers need assurance that they are on the right track with accomplishing the school-

wide goals (Young et al., 2016). They want to be observed and provided useful feedback as well as have professional development opportunities that will help them grow into their role (Campbell, 2017; Carre, 2020; Ion et al., 2019; Koonkongsatian, 2017; Talley, 2017, Yilmaz, 2016). Providing opportunities for teachers to improve in their area of expertise can lead to a positive school environment.

There also were findings that special education teachers typically cited better communication, more support with curriculum and materials creation, and increased support with paperwork and meetings as the three most important types of administrator support (Koonkongsatian, 2017). Participants cited a desire to feel appreciated to feel cared for by their administration as a fulfillment of their need for self-actualization. Administrator support contributes significantly to better self-efficacy among special-education teachers (Koonkongsatian, 2017). These teachers feel less isolated from other teachers when conversations with a manager are noteworthy, supportive, and encourage a teacher's desire to grow professionally and positively impact student achievement.

Schools need administrators who can support the professional growth of teachers and provide schools with strong leadership (Seymour, 2016). The expectations surrounding school administrators have changed over the years. From being considered as managers of schools as infrastructures, administrators now have moved to the role of an institutional leader who must put the students' learning as the first responsibility in addition to managing buildings, spending ample amounts of time in classrooms, and fostering a cohesive academic community.

The leadership style of the administrator can influence teacher attrition. Principals with poor leadership styles are common reasons for employees to quit (Oke et al., 2016). Oke et al. (2016) stated that bad leadership styles lead to dissatisfaction, which could further lead to attrition. The most often cited reason for attrition was disrespect from school administrators (Oke et al., 2016). Administrators also have the role of adopting forward-thinking initiatives, making on-going decisions about curriculum and instructions, and building joint missions, which could foster the retention of teachers.

Tehseen et al. (2015) stated that favorable working conditions where administrator support, and leadership exist positively contribute to job satisfaction among teachers. Furthermore, job satisfaction is related to lower rates of attrition in academic environments. Song and Alpaslan (2015) stated that science teachers' job satisfaction increases and their turnover decreases when administrator support increases. Schools have lower teacher turnover rates when administrators offer curriculum materials in timely, consistent, and inclusive manners. Providing adequate materials to teachers is also associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of stress among teachers. Administrators' support in student discipline problems also improved job satisfaction of teachers (Alpaslan, 2015)**.** A supportive environment is one of the most crucial factors to achieve reduced attrition because teachers who rate their administrators as undependable, inconsistent, and incompetent are more likely to leave their positions or the teaching profession entirely. Teachers' commitment to the job is improved by better administrator support (Song et al., 2015). Teachers want to feel valued by their administrators.

Epling (2016) also studied the mass exodus of teachers in West Virginia over the last two decades, which has led to the shortage of certified educators in the classroom. The author stated that this movement had been a result of teachers transferring schools and teachers leaving the profession. The study focused on high school principals' perceptions of the administrator support necessary to retain beginning teachers and the extent to which their perceptions are aligned with what the current body of literature says about the identified needs of teachers. The findings of the study showed that the administrators' perspective and the beginning teachers' perspectives on the most useful administrator support behaviors differed greatly, which could have influenced the large attrition rates in the area (Epling, 2016). Administrator support studies have shown the importance of job satisfaction and a subsequent desire to either stay or leave organizations. Administrator support is provided and received in different ways (Burke et al., 2015; Epling; 2016, & Hughes, 2015). The following section focused on teachers' perception of administrator support and how this affects their self-efficacy and decision to stay.

A teacher's perception of support received from administrators is vital in the decision to stay or exit the school. Hughes et al. (2015) conducted a study that examined the teacher's perception of administrator support. Teachers participated in a survey that showed results in the areas of perceived support, received support, and how teachers felt support affected their decisions to stay. The participants defined what types of supports were needed for teacher retention, and the most popular areas of support were: emotional, environmental, and instructional support. Teachers who felt that they received these

supports were least likely to leave. The supports provided, showed that teachers were receiving positive feedback and felt valued, thus improving their retention in the school (Hughes et al., 2015). Providing specific supports to teachers brings about a positive change in their decision to stay at their school.

Teacher Recognition

Teachers feel valued and supported when they receive recognition from their school leaders for the work that they do. Teachers feel supported when they receive positive recognition from their administrators. Those teachers who do not receive positive recognition were more at risk of leaving the field (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Kalai, 2016; Mason & Matsas, 2015; Perryman & Calvert, 2019; Yilmaz, 2016). Support can be provided to teachers from their school leaders in multiple ways. One way is recognizing teachers for their hard work and dedication in their classrooms. Hughes et al. (2015) found three domains on a scale of importance for teachers from highest to lowest with emotional and environmental support being the highest and instructional and technical support being lowest. Administrators were a part of the survey as well; however, their perception of support was different from the teachers. Administrators perceived support to include instructional support for teachers (Carre, 2020**;** Burke, 2015; Hughes, 2015). There are several ways that administrators can provide teacher support and instructional and environmental support can be another strategy for retaining teachers.

Instructional and Environmental Support

Instructional and environmental support is another form of support provided by school administrations, which can be determining factors of a teacher's decision to stay

or leave. Other instructional supports include demonstration teaching, co-teaching, clinical supervision, problem solving, and mentoring (Lochmiller, 2016). These forms of support and the teachers' perception of them are heavily related to teacher performance.

Simmons (2014) investigated teachers' perceptions of instructional support from administrations in the implementation of Common Core State Standards. The sample of the aforementioned study included teachers from four schools in a metropolitan school area. Simmons (2014) found that the provisions of support were provided at the school level as opposed to the district level. On the other hand, teachers did not receive individual support from their administrators nor from the district. Effective leaders provide instructional support through enabling the professional development of their staff, providing means for group cohesiveness in the academic setting, and providing direct individual assistance through peer coaching (Hughes, 2015). Instructional support is helpful with developing the talent of classroom teachers.

Other instructional supports include demonstration teaching, co-teaching, clinical supervision, problem solving, and mentoring (Lochmiller, 2016). These forms of support and the teachers' perception of them are heavily related to teacher performance. Through a qualitative study of teachers' experiences, the researcher found that teachers' perceptions of staff development from administrators were positive and highly effective, leading to positive experiences for the teachers. These experiences led to enhanced efficacy and confidence in implementing Common Core State Standards in their classrooms. School-level direct individual assistance also helped the teachers grasp the concepts more quickly and ask questions that geared explicitly to improve the instructors

in their area of teaching. The administrators' capability of espousing collegiality and collaboration also helped the teachers in their implementation of Common Core State Standards. The author also noted that the efficacy of school-level staff development had the most favorable perception of the participants.

School-level instructional support had a greater effect on staff development, group development, and direct individual assistance perceptions of the teachers than district-level instructional support. School officials can control many of the factors influencing the job satisfaction of teachers because they can promote teacher satisfaction both in extrinsic and intrinsic ways (Von Fischer & De Jong, 2017). Von Fischer and De Jong (2017) stated that even if public schools invest resources in training new teachers and pass mandates to ensure high quality of education, without capable administrators who can cultivate and retain great teachers' efforts for retention are still likely to be unsuccessful.

Burke (2015) stated that early career teachers or novice teachers, who intended to leave viewed support as sharing teaching resources, cooperative teaching and planning, offsite discussions about classroom management, programming with mentors, and having a greater professional voice. These findings were supported by Lambeth (2015), who found teachers perceived support through individual recognition, support, or visits in their classroom when there are specific projects and professional development as catalysts for retention. Teachers valued communication, administrator support in the areas of emotional, environmental, and instructional support; these areas affected the decisions of teachers about staying, particularly in hard to staff schools (Callahan, 2016;

Craig, 2014, Foley, 2018; Mertler, 2016; Rosenberg & Miles, 2018). Being aware of the

specific support needed for teachers can lead to positive results such as teacher attrition.

Emotional Support

Emotional support could pertain to the need for teachers to feel valued in their

schools (Burke, 2015). Providing feedback is another way for administrators to assist

with teacher validation. Critical feedback offers teachers with a sense of direction and

builds a teacher/administrator relationship. Feedback can also improve instructional

delivery within the classroom (Gotian, 2016). When teachers have clear and concise

directions, it is more than likely students will improve academically (Rosenberg & Miles,

2018). Feedback provides the teacher with the guidance needed to ensure they are on

track with the expectations of their school and administrators (Ion et al., 2019).

Teachers have an overwhelming amount of work they do after teaching hours. A

heavy workload is another reason teachers decide to leave (Burke et al., 2015; Cancio et

al., 2018; Harmsen et al., 2018, 2015; Vittek, 2015). Teachers feel valued at their schools

when they receive individual praise for the work that they are doing (Burke et al., 2015).

It may be beneficial for teachers to receive some form of individual recognition, which

could be verbally delivered or written by administrators.

Recognition of teachers' hard work seems to be important. When teachers do not

feel acknowledged for the work that they put into the profession; they tend to leave their

school, transfer to another school, or leave the job altogether (Burke et al., 2015; Hughes,

2015; Ingersoll, 2015). Being aware of the specific support needed for early career

teachers or novice teachers can lead to positive results, such as teacher retention, efficacy, and student achievement.

Bullock et al**.** (2017) performed a pilot investigation to analyze how educators who have had experiences with students with challenging behaviors perceive the school-related challenges and barriers that prevent them from reaching their maximum effectiveness at the job. In the study, Bullock et al., 2017 gathered data from the educators' perspectives of their preparation programs, the strengths and weaknesses of their administrators, their leaders' ability to encourage collaboration, and the major problems they face when dealing with problematic students. They found that teachers' perceptions of the administrators' leadership greatly influenced the effectiveness of the schools. As the administrators set a precedent for establishing nurturing environments within which all personnel feel value, and the students have ensured an education that can best meet their behavioral and learning needs and wants. Bullock et al., (2017) stated that their administrators' leadership greatly influenced educators' perceptions of the school climate, and respondents' perceptions of leadership ranged from average to below average. Educators rated their administrators as average in overall guidance and support. They rated them as below average in providing efficient frameworks for addressing various tasks required for them, such as paperwork, discipline, and collaboration.

Teachers' perceptions of controllable, leadership-related factors are closely related to their job satisfaction. Promoting employee autonomy through empowerment has also been found to have positive outcomes on employee job satisfaction (von Fischer, 2017). The authors studied how leadership behaviors and the teachers' perceptions of

those behaviors affect their job satisfaction. Through a quantitative study on the perceptions of teachers on servant leadership characteristics of their principals and their job satisfaction, the authors found that empowerment, humility, authenticity, standing back, and stewardship had a strong relationship with increased job satisfaction among teachers.

Specific strategies are needed for administrators to be equipped to provide more support for first-year teachers in both special education and general education areas (Lesh et al., 2017; Vittek, 2015). One specific strategy that some administrators have adopted in their schools is mentorship. Mentorship can help reduce teacher attrition in schools (Lindqvist & Nördanger, 2016). Policymakers have invested in resources to create mentorship programs for first-year teachers (Zang, 2016). The mentor program provides support to first-year teachers is designed to equip them with skills to manage the stresses of the job, curriculum knowledge, and to provide emotional and environmental support.

These studies confirm that teachers' perceptions of administrator support have an influence on their perception of the school climate, their performance, job satisfaction, and potential for attrition or retention. There is extensive literature focusing on the importance of administrator support for teacher effectiveness; however, the complex environments of schools present different external and internal demands, which continue to open opportunities for research in specific settings with different administrative natures and teacher efficacy (Bullock et al., 2017). The following sections detailed the importance of mentorship and induction programs in increasing perception of support and teacher efficacy.

Mentorship and Induction Programs

Mentors are leaders within their profession that can assist, guide, teach, and serve as a role model for a novice or new teachers to help them become effective teachers and create a classroom environment that is conducive for teaching (Sutcher et al., 2016). A mentor's responsibility is to support the growth and development of a newly hired teacher in the areas of instruction, planning, and content knowledge (Covington, 2016). Mentors are highly skilled in their content area, are good communicators, and provide adequate training for new teachers with the common goal of student achievement. Dealing with unpredictable behaviors from students can take an emotional toll on a new teacher (Gotian, 2016; Hicks, 2016; Watts, 2016). About 40-50% of novice teachers are likely to leave their profession in the first five years (Anderson, 2019; Cullen, 2019; DeCesare and McClelland, 2016; Farrell, 2016; Vittek, 2015)**.** Mentors also provide emotional support for new teachers during this challenging phase of a new career (Passmore & Prescott, 2019). Mentorship provides an avenue of support for teachers from other teachers that are well versed in their area of study.

Professional development and mentors are often offered to new teachers. Mentor programs have been adopted at many school districts to support new teachers with the many responsibilities and stressors that teachers face. System-wide teacher preparation programs also seem to have a positive effect on teacher attrition (Lochmiller, 2016; Mason & Matsas, 2015; McInerney, 2015; Mulei et al., 2016; Passmore & Prescott, 2019). Career switcher programs and other new teacher induction preparation have built-in components that allow outside mentorship to visit schools and offer support (Martin &

Hoffman, 2016; Williams, 2018). Universities offer a variety of workshops and learning opportunities that equip teachers with the skills and strategies they needed for the preparation of the classroom. Offering encouragement, professional development time off, or other information would also be helpful for administration.

Many new teachers enter the profession through alternative route programs. Approximately 68% of math and 42% of science teachers do not have an educational degree (Ingersoll et al., 2014). This lack of formal training presents issues surrounding student learning and classroom management. While content may not be an issue for some of these career switchers, the lack of pedagogy may require more support for these new teachers. This incomplete pedagogical background has been outlined by Ingersoll et al. (2014), who found 24.6% of teachers without pedagogical training, decided to leave teaching after their first year. Therefore, mentors play an essential role in bridging the gap of teachers being productive and successful in their early years of teaching. Ensuring that teacher mentors have common planning and same subject collaboration with other teachers are factors in retaining teachers (Gjedia et al., 2018; Passmore and Prescott, 2019; Redding and Henry, 2018). Specific strategies of support for teachers can be beneficial with keeping teachers at their job.

Mentoring and induction programs are important aspects of teacher education in countries worldwide since the 1980's with mentoring conversations gaining increased attention as a way of enhancing the practice of experienced teachers and student teachers. It has been found to be an important factor in increasing teacher retention, improve the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers, reduce feelings of isolation, and promote the

ongoing professional development and lifelong learning of teachers (Gjedia et al., 2018). National studies have shown that mentoring is an effective intervention to improve performance and retention and that mentoring new teachers for a period of at least two years can have positive impacts on student academic gains (DeCesare et al., 2016). Mentorship has also been cited as a way for the district and state educational leaders to improve the instructional practices of new teachers and reduce the turnover of teachers.

Mentors can provide specific teacher supports in areas of: "knowledge of the curriculum, effective communication, building trust, being a good listener, and providing effective teaching strategies" (Hobbs, 2016, p.5). Therefore, the guidance of a mentor is necessary for the efficacy of novice teachers. By providing the support that teachers need in the form of mentorships, novice teachers have the opportunity to be well prepared in the teaching profession in their beginning years. Mentorship can play a significant role in helping teachers navigate a school and adapt to the culture and climate at a school.

Mentoring programs vary widely. DeCesare et al. (2016) studied gaps in literature and policy regarding mentoring in school districts. They found that full-time teachers, who do not receive release time from their teaching responsibilities, typically provide mentoring. Moreover, mentoring of new teachers also often tapers off after the first year. Nearly half of districts did not provide stipends for mentors, and lack of funding was a commonly cited barrier to a successful mentorship. They stated that district and state leaders must work together to identify districts with successful mentoring program components and share best practices and the lessons learned. This information sharing could contribute to a stronger understanding of mentorship across districts and the

specific types of programs and policies currently implemented. The need to improve instruction quality, prioritize the investment of limited resources to support teachers is important as states and districts continue to grapple with teacher burnout and turnover.

The benefits of mentorship, however, can be mediated by the school context, settings, and economic situations of the educational communities. Mentoring is a means to a larger end of more robust improvement-oriented professions in schools. Mentors must be trained and qualified based on professional standards in areas of communication, counseling, objective designing, and assessment methodologies (Gjedia et al., 2018). Greater support and professionalization for mentors could also positively enhance the effectiveness and impact of mentoring.

These previous studies emphasized the positive effects of mentorship on the performance and job satisfaction of beginning teachers. Research also highlights the impact of school culture on the effectiveness of mentorship on teacher satisfaction, learning, and retention. Moreover, the literature also highlighted impact of mentorship on reducing teacher burnout and subsequent attrition. The following section detailed the literature on burnout among teachers.

Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is a great concern. Teacher burnout is defined as a physical, mental, and emotional state that can be observed in people in constant face-to-face interaction with others in a professional setting (O'Brennan et al., 2017). Burnout can involve physical fatigue, long-term exhaustion, hopelessness, desperateness, and a negative concept of self, feelings of inefficiency, and negative attitude towards others in

the workplace (Yilmaz et al., 2015). Burnout has also been defined as a psychological

syndrome, which stems as a response to chronic interpersonal job stressors (Kadi et al.,

2015; Oberle et al., 2016; Richards et al., 2016; Skaalvik, 2017). It is known to be one of

the most important problems of recent times for teachers and defined as ineffectiveness,

lack of energy, wearing out, and an exhaustion of an individual's inner resources due to

unsatisfied needs (Kadi et al., 2015). Smetackova (2017) concluded that teacher burnout

can include deep and permanent exhaustion with several emotional, cognitive, physical,

and social symptoms, which result from long-term occupational stress in occupations

with continuous human interactions and high responsibility for other people. Burnout can

be a challenging problem for teachers and administrators to address.

Burnout has three dimensions comprises emotional exhaustion, depersonalization,

and lack of personal accomplishment (Skaalvik, 2017; Smetackova, 2017; Oberle et al.,

2016). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being overwhelmed and lack of control

over emotional resources due to the occupation. It is the most fundamental component of

burnout syndromes and describes situations of emotional and physical fatigue.

Depersonalization pertains to the reaction of employees to emotional exhaustion through

which they exhibit indifference and cynicism towards other people. Lack of personal

accomplishment relates to the situation in which an individual assesses himself/herself in

a negative manner, which leads to a decrease in feelings of accomplishment, negative

appraisal of self-efficiency, low motivation, lack of control, despair, and lower self-

respect (Yilmaz et al., 2015). Other dimensions of burnout have since been added to this,

such as physical fatigue and cognitive weariness. However, all dimensions highlight the

emotional dimension, which emphasizes the importance of emotion-regulation abilities among teachers, which represents a core component of emotional intelligence (Smetackova, 2017). Burnout can increase perceived stress and may be experienced as a result of many responsibilities of a teacher (Miller et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016). Teacher burnout occurs when teachers perceive they are exhausted due to the stressors of the job (Brunsting et al., 2014; Merida-Lopez et al., 2017; Oberle et al., 2016, Yilmaz et al., 2015). Other reasons for teacher burnout can be linked to workability, mental health, perfectionism, emotional regulation, job satisfaction, and teacher turnover (Schaufeli et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2015, Zysberg et al., 2017). Studies on the factors associated with burnout have also highlighted environmental and system-related factors like compensation, work-related pressures, and workload as well as interpersonal factors such as emotional labor. Frequent organizational students and the hostile and aggressive behavior of students also often cause burnout at school. The school climate also plays a significant role in the prevention or cultivation of burnout among teachers through the level of collaboration, relationship with students, openness to innovation, the capacity to influence decision-making processes, and the adequacy of school resources (Dahlkamp et al., 2017; Richardo et al, 2019). Other causes of high rates of burnout include environmental factors such as pupil misbehavior, students' learning difficulties, poor relations, poor student performance, and work overload (Nemer et al., 2019; Opeyemi et al., 2015). Role conflict and ambiguity, time pressure, relationships with supervisors, inadequate salary, and perceived low status of one's profession are also important factors that increase the risk of burnout (Smetackova, 2017). When teachers feel that their efforts

do not line up with the expectations of the job, they also experience job-related stress (Shen et al., 2015). Teachers may also feel that the efforts that they put forth are not successful (Fernet, et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2015).

Burnout has short and long-term effects. These effects have detrimental outcomes for teachers, their students, and the school system. The effects such as withdrawal from work and the lack of workplace involvement, psychosomatic complaints which can lead to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, lowered team commitment, deterioration of interpersonal communication, and the general interruption of the organizational culture and productivity patterns of the organization (Zysberg et al., 2017). Teachers who are experiencing burnout may also feel as if they do not have the emotional capacity to deal with challenging students, provide a positive impact, or initiate change within students (Day et al., 2016). These teachers also focus less on working with students to increase student achievement and may remove themselves from the expectations of teaching (Wong et al., 2015; Stewart, 2015). Burnout hurts social relationships and attitudes, which can make interactions at work and home is difficult because individuals suffering from burnout could either be socially withdrawn or more prone to conflicts (Opeyemi et al., 2015). Burnout is also correlated to teachers' self-efficacy with teachers with lower degrees of burnout reporting higher self-efficacy scores than teachers with high degrees of burnout. Self-efficacy is also proven to have a longitudinal effect on depersonalization and personal accomplishment (Smetackova, 2017). Teacher burnout is a major concern and has a negative effect on a teacher's ability to perform their job duties in an effective manner.

There have been many studies that investigated teacher burnout and their influence on the workplace (Doss, 2016; Jacobs, 2016; McLean et al., 2019; O'Brennan, et al., 2017; Stewart, 2015). O'Brennan et al. (2017) conducted a study on multi-levels of teacher burnout in high schools in the state of Maryland. The study examined high school staff members in 58 high schools and their perceptions of self-efficacy, connectedness, and school level variables (i.e., urban settings, suspensions). The researchers found components that contributed to teacher burnout at the school level. The contributors were: suspensions, demographics, perceptions of connectedness, safety, and self-efficacy were in relation to job burnout (O'Brennan et al., 2017). O'Brennan et al., also stated that teachers were fearful of losing their jobs and utilizing sick leave to search for other employment, due to low morale of the school, or for mental health days. Teachers that participated in the study stated that they felt stressed and burned out as a result of the schools moral. This study is pertinent to my study because it provides a perspective of teachers' experiences and the results of their experiences that led teacher burnout. The information from this study may be helpful in ways of retaining teachers.

Teachers who do not cope with stress well may experience burnout. When teachers can identify why and what they are dealing with regarding stress, they are able to cope (Shen et al., 2015). When teachers are experiencing a "burnout," the symptoms they experience are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of students, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishments (Meredith et al., 2016; Rosado, 2017). The literature on stress is consistent in stating that unmitigated stress can lead to a broad range of negative outcomes, among which burnout takes a major role (Zysberg et al., 2017). Burnout is an

acute challenge characterized by general emotional and mental exhaustion resulting from an extended exposure to stress that affects both newcomers and tenured teachers (Zysberg et al., 2017). Burnout causes teacher to make decisions that may be detrimental to the school's culture.

A teacher's decision to leave is recognized as a gradual process which can be triggered by emotional burnout which may be produced by classroom or school demands and through policy reforms that impact the professional and personal attributes of teachers including preparation and commitment to the job (Ávalos et al., 2016). It is a common reason that teachers decide to leave their profession and is a contributor to teacher attrition worldwide (Brunsting et al., 2014; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond). In secondary education, 22% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Conley, 2017; Green, 2017; Ingersoll, 2018; Jones & Watson, 2017; Kelly & Northrop, 2015). The yearly changes and pressure to meet the demands of standardized tests have led to even veteran teachers choosing other career choices (Thibodeaux, 2015). According to Matiang' i et al., (2016), administrator support through providing professional development is important for increasing effective productivity in the workplace and consequently alleviates teacher burnout.

Administrations can also develop appropriate strategies and interventions for students with bad behavior to help reduce burnout because of disruptive and antisocial student behavior. Moreover, school administrations can also investigate fair wage systems and enhanced school facilities to reduce burnout among teachers (Matiang' i et al., 2016). Studies highlighted negative outcomes associated with burnout among

teachers as well as the factors that are associated with the cultivation and prevention of burnout among newcomers and tenured teachers. The following section focused on student behavior and administrator support and its impact on teachers' performance and school quality.

Student Behavior and Administrator Support

Teachers face misbehavior in their classrooms. When a new teacher experiences behavior issues in the classroom environment, they want to know that they are supported by their administration. There may be school-wide structures in place for dealing with misconduct. The administration is responsible for making sure that these structures are attainable, effective, and reinforced (Conley at al., 2017). Schools that do not have a plan for student behavior often experience high teacher turnover (Pratt et al., 2014, Saicam et al., 2016; Nemer, 2019). School systems often have a tiered guideline for dealing with student behavior, but it is up to the principal to enforce and implement it. The lack of supervision and teacher support surrounding student behaviors and expectations can increase negative feelings within the school culture (Schaefer, 2013; Vagi et al., 2017). In urban areas, this is a concern.

Albright et al's (2017), qualitative study focused novice teachers and their perception of pre-service and administrator and district support. This study found that teachers felt that the preparation programs prepared them for teaching the content but did not provide them with the necessary skills to teach in an urban classroom setting. Teachers stated that the challenges faced in an urban classroom setting differed from that of a suburban or rural environment (Albright et al., 2017). New teachers find teaching in

these environments, especially difficult as they often take on the personal needs of their students to help them (Holmes et al., 2019). In the study of Albright et al. (2017), mentioned that classroom management was a struggle and teachers often felt frustrated with the students that did not follow instructions or did not respond to redirection of the teacher. Also, teachers felt that they did not receive the proper support to handle classroom management from administrators in their school.

Administrators felt that novice teachers were not prepared for an urban setting and the challenges that it brings. Administrators also felt that first year teachers did not have good classroom management skills, skills to build positive relationships with at-risk students, or the skillset for de-escalating behaviors of situations in the classroom (Albright et al., 2017). The recommendations from this study suggest that induction programs should be provided at the collegiate level so that novice teachers are prepared once they enter the classroom and more support from administration (Albright et. al., 2017). This study is helpful to my study in that it provides insight of teacher's perceptions of their pre-service. The recommendations mentioned also can support with preparing novice teachers for an urban setting and may be a piece to the puzzle of reducing teacher retention.

Districts are providing ways to entice teachers to teach in urban settings. School systems are offering incentives for teachers to stay in urban areas, but many schools still see a high teacher turnover (Albright et al., 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Conley, 2017; Gotian, 2016; Green, 2017). Many schools do experience success when the administration is visible, fair, and has structures for dealing with behavior

immediately (Holmes & Gibson, 2019; Jones et al., 2017; Wood, 2017). Administrator

support can influence positive results in schools.

Administrators can show support to teachers by having clear school-wide

expectations and structures in place to support classroom rules and instruction (Gotian,

2016). Having the appropriate resources to offer critical support is often an issue for

administrators (Anderson, 2019; Gotian, 2016). Many schools lack the funds for

programs that require extra staff and space (Green, 2017). School administration must be

resourceful and creative; they must rely on the community and parents to offer support in

shortage areas that require immediate action (Anderson, 2019; Campbell, 2017; Holmes

et al., 2019). Sometimes it may require strategic planning to reallocate school personnel

and classrooms to meet the needs of teachers and to provide structure for instruction

(Anderson, 2019; Mertler, 2016; Norris, 2019; Redding & Henry, 2019). Teachers can be

supported by mentors and attend professional developments that can assist them with

classroom management. Mentors can provide classroom management strategies for

novice teachers to maintain a positive classroom environment (Gotian, 2016; Polikoff,

2015). Implementing strategies for teachers to be successful in the classroom is vital with

keeping teachers at their schools.

Researchers have explored the needs and concerns of teachers' perception of

administrator support and have identified several approaches to help reduce the teacher

retention rate. The strengths of the research above studies indicate that administrator

support has a great influence on teacher retention. The controversy of this topic of study

is that the perspectives of administrator support could vary between the teacher and

administrators (Koonkgsatian, 2017). Therefore, more research is needed about the universal meaning of administrator support and how it can be implemented within schools to retain teachers. The topical areas in this study are derived from the Literature Review.

School Culture

Administrators play a vital role in the culture of a school. The role of an administrator has control of the temperature of the climate of the school, and this includes classroom management support. The culture of a school can be defined as a combination of people working together to create the norms, values, attitudes, behaviors, and traditions to set the tone of the school (Dinsdale, 2019; Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019). Setting the tone of a school determines if the culture is negative or positive (Ahmad et al., 2019; Barth, 2002, Dinsdale, 2019).

Many researchers believe that teachers leave their profession due to the lack of administration support in the areas of classroom management (Ahmad et al., 2019, Albright et al., 2017; Dinsdale, 2019). Classroom management is one of the many reasons teachers leave their jobs. Teachers do not feel the support from their administrators when it comes to classroom management. Researchers Alright et al. (2017) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of their pre-service programs and if they felt that these programs prepared them for teaching in the urban setting. The results found that the teachers did not feel as if their programs prepared them for the urban setting, but they did feel as if they were fully trained in content knowledge.

On the other hand, teachers did not feel that they received enough support in the classroom. Teachers experienced frustration when students did not comply with their re-directions. Due to the non-compliance of the students caused the negative behaviors to escalate in the classroom. Therefore, teachers struggled with managing their classrooms and resulted in teacher leaving their jobs. In this study both administrators and teachers agreed that the pre-services did not prepare the teachers for an urban setting and the challenges that it brings. Administrators felt that the novice teachers lacked classroom management skills, relationship-building skills, and lacked experience in an urban classroom (Albright et al., 2017). Support of an administrator plays an important role in setting the tone of the schools' culture.

Other researchers also believe that administrators are the centerpiece of setting the tone of school culture. Researchers Zahed-Babelan et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study of instructional leadership's effect on teachers' engagement in the areas of school culture, empowerment, and job characteristics. In the study, the researchers used five research tools to collect data. One of those tools was a school culture survey. The five research tools results stated that there was a correlation between instructional leadership and teacher engagement and school culture, job characteristics of teachers, and empowerment (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019). The research suggested that if administrators would assist with instruction, collaboration, shared leadership, and a shared vision, then outcome of these supports can create a positive school culture (Zahe-Babelan et al., 2019). Ahmad et al. (2017), studied the influence of support and its correlation with school culture. Ahmad et al. agrees with the previously mentioned

researchers that the support of an administrator influences the culture of a school. Administrators lead the way for creating the school culture. The principal has a unique opportunity to create and support programs that address the various needs of teachers; moreover, they often have a major role in setting the climate and culture of the school.

Summary

There are several reasons why teachers decide to leave the profession or transfer to another school such as heavy workloads, school climate, and culture, and lack of resources. However, one of the most occurring reasons for teacher attrition listed in the literature is the lack of administrator support (Burke et al., 2015; Campbell, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2016; Epling, 2016; Farinde-Wu, 2018). Teachers might experience the feeling of not being supported by the administrators in their schools. Support from administrators is critical to teachers, and many leaders of schools are unavailable to provide the necessary attention that teachers need due to competing for duties (Cooper, 2016). Based on the literature, there is a gap in research. The gap is that there is a small amount of data reported about the specific support teachers need from their administrators. More research is required to determine the specific supports teachers are expecting and to provide professional development opportunities for administrators. The professional development will inform administrators of the specific supports needed to address teacher retention (Hughes, 2015; Koonkongsatian, 2017; Vittek, 2015). Effective specific support for teachers may also lead to teacher retention. The end results of this study were used to create a professional development series for administrators to address this need.

Teachers' perceptions of support and administrators' perceptions of support are not aligned (Wilkins, 2014; Watts, 2016; Wood, 2017). A commonly shared definition of teacher support should be sought by schools to define what support is, what it looks like, and the expectations administrators have for teachers and vice versa. This will produce harmony amongst the school staff and administrators regarding communication and expectations of administrator support. Alignment and agreement of support practices may increase teacher retention and decrease teacher attrition (Hughes et al., 2015).

Supportive practices created by administrators may bridge the gap between the overwhelming responsibilities of teachers and the time they have to meet those demands; this tension has caused teachers to experience teacher burnout. Burnout is another reason for teachers deciding to leave their profession and contributes to teacher attrition worldwide. Burnout happens over time and is linked to mental health, perfectionism, emotional regulations, workability, and teacher turnover (Jacobson, 2016; Maele, 2015; McLean et al., 2019). Teacher burnout is the perception of a teacher's potential for obtaining student achievement (Maele, 2015).

Mentors are leaders within the profession who can provide assistance, guidance, and a role model and teacher to novice or new teachers. They play an important role by bridging the gap of teacher efficacy in the first years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Ensuring that teacher mentors have common planning, same subject, and collaboration with other teachers are other factors in retaining teachers that administration should consider (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Gotian, 2016; Semarco & Cho, 2017). By providing the support that teachers need in the form of mentorships and

administrator support can provide novice teachers with the opportunity to be well prepared in the teaching profession in their beginning years.

Mentoring is one strategy that can be used to support the culture of the school in a positive way (Kirkland et al., 2016). Administrators lead the pathway of creating or setting the tone of school culture. By providing supports for teachers in the areas of instruction, classroom management, shared leadership, and shared vision can lead to a positive school culture (Ahmad et al., 2017). Since lack of support is a major concern amongst educators, creating a positive school culture may lead to reductions in teacher attrition.

Although teacher attrition has received considerable research over the past few years, minimal qualitative research has explored middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support and teacher retention. Teachers must participate in this study to voice their concerns about the specific supports needed for teacher retention. It is also important to view teacher retention through the lens of teachers to explore their perspectives about the ongoing issue. A basic qualitative study provided a way to address the gap in the literature about teachers' perceptions of administrator support.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this basic qualitative study, I investigated middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher attrition, and teacher retention. Teachers in a local school district were leaving their schools at significant rates, and administrators expressed a need for support for retaining teachers. This study may be pertinent to administrators so that they are aware of the specific supports needed to increase teacher retention rates in their schools. Chapter 3 includes the following sections: (a) Research Design and Rationale, (b) Role of the Researcher, (c) Participant Selection, (d) Sources of Data, (e) Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection, (f) Data Analysis Plan, (g) Trustworthiness, (h) Ethical Procedures, and (i) Discrepant Cases. In addition, a summary is presented at the end of this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions that guided this study were

- How do middle school teachers describe administrator support?

- What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers leave their positions?

- What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers stay in their positions?

I chose a basic qualitative study design to capture the perceptions of middle school teachers on administrator support and teacher retention. A basic qualitative study was appropriate, because the goal was understanding participants' experiences as well as their beliefs, attitudes, and ideas (Braun & Terry, 2014; Caelli et al., 2003; Kahlke, 2014; MacLeod, 2016; Merriam, 2019; Miles & Saldana, 2013; Thorne, 2016).

I examined other qualitative designs prior to choosing the basic qualitative study approach: ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Jamali, 2018). Ethnography was inappropriate because it requires the researcher to examine an individual or a group of individuals in their setting or everyday life or study a cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period (Atkins, 2016; Mannen et al., 2017). A phenomenological design was also unsuitable for this study because this approach focuses on the philosophy of the phenomenon, which requires a small number of participants with more than one interview over a long period of time to develop patterns in the data (Mannen et al., 2017; Merriam et al., 2019; Moustakas, 1994; Nazir, 2016; Welch, 2017). Lastly, grounded theory was not considered because in this method, the researcher constantly compares within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory is created (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lambert, 2019; Merriam, 2015). The goal was not to develop a theory but to understand teachers' perceptions of administrator support. Therefore, a basic qualitative design was appropriate for this research because of the need to explore a specific phenomenon based on the perceptions of a group of individuals (Merriam et al., 2015).

One way to collect data in a basic qualitative study is through individual interviews and observations with the participants (Merriam, 2019, p. 25). In this study, I used interviews for data collection as well as written notes during the interviews. I conducted and audio recorded interviews via Zoom. The data collection took place over several weeks. Before data collection, I obtained the permission from the District of

Columbia Process and Requirements to Conduct Research or Obtain Confidential Data,

and from the institutional review board (IRB) at Walden University.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this qualitative study was to obtain data about the

thoughts of the participants regarding the phenomenon of interest (Merriam et al., 2019).

As the researcher of this study, I was an observer and participant. I played a neutral

position and had limited interactions with the participants. I shared the protocols for the

interviews with the participants, and I allowed participants to ask questions to ensure

confirmability and ease with the process. The participants were chosen using the

purposive sampling method (Barratt et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016; Sherma, 2017). This

method was used to select participants that provided in-depth and detailed information

about middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and

attrition. Therefore, there were no personal, instructional, or supervisory relationships

involving power over the participants. Though participants did not have any connections

to me, a researcher–participant relationship was established to ensure the confidentiality

and trust between the participants and myself. When collecting the needed information, I

also made sure to address potential influences of personal biases. I did this by having

participants review data results and review findings with my peers to try to avoid any

biases (Algozzine & Hancock, 2016). No incentives were given. However, thank you

cards were given to the participants**.**

Methodology

In this basic qualitative study (Merriam et al., 2018), I examined middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. The focus of this section is on the methodology and design used for this study. The discussion includes sections on participant selection; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and a data analysis plan.

Participant Selection

The participants for this study were middle school teachers who were selected from social media. Teachers were selected using purposive sampling (Barratt et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016; Sherma, 2017), which I used to identify and select participants who were knowledgeable, experienced, and can articulate their perceptions of administrator support and teacher retention. When conducting purposive sampling, a researcher selects participants based on a specific set of eligibility criteria that are aligned with the topic of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). I also selected participants with the expectation that each participant provided unique and rich information (Etikan et al., 2016).

The selected participants met the following criteria of teaching experiences that ranged from 1–3 years (novice teachers), 3–5 years (experienced teachers), and 5 and above (master teachers). There were 10 teachers selected to participate in this study. Participants completed a demographics interview that helped determine if the volunteers met the criteria for this study.

Once I received approval from the IRB, I recruited participants over social media. I sent the invitational letter to educational social media groups that I am a member

of: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. I asked interested volunteers to respond to my inbox with their email address. Once, I received the emails.

A Walden informed consent form was provided via email for participants. The email also informed participants to sign with "I consent" if they agreed to participate in the study. Once the participants agreed to participate, I counted that as their consent. I also informed participants that they had the right to opt out at any time in the study without penalty.

Instrumentation

I collected data using instruments that I created. Data collection enlarges the style that in-depth facts acquired to inform research questions (Creswell, 2007, Yin, 2014). The data were collected from middle school teachers in an urban setting. The instrument used was an interview. There were two parts to the interview. The first part of the interview asked demographic questions and the other part asked open-ended questions about middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition.

Interviews

Each interview had two parts: the first part was a demographic interview portion and the second portion included open-ended questions regarding teacher's perceptions of administrator support, retention, and attrition. Open-ended questioning provided participants the opportunity to respond in detail of their experiences (Tran et al., 2016). I also used prompts if the response seemed limited. The interviews took place via Zoom. I explained the purpose of the interviews, terms of confidentiality, the format of the

interviews, and the amount of time the interview may take. I shared my contact information and prepared for recording the data by note taking and the use of a recorder. The protocols for both interviews were: send an email about the purpose of the interviews, ask for participants, and provide a confidentiality signature page for those who agree to participate, to sign electronically and return via email. A date and time slot for teachers to sign up to participate in the interviews, and a login for Zoom was shared with participants who agreed to participate.

After the interviews, I checked the recorder to ensure that it worked throughout the interviews. I also added my observations' written notes made during the interviews in my journal. The demographic interview questions are in Appendix B. The "Middle School Teacher's Perceptions" interview questions are in Appendix C.

The interview questions that I developed are open-ended questions and the protocol for the interview questions are provided in Appendix A. The questions were specifically aligned to collect data to answer the research questions. The interview questions 1-4 explored teachers' experiences and expectations of administrators and questions 5-10 were designed to obtain information about the types of support needed to retain teachers.

I ensured that the validity of the interview questions by pilot testing with two practice participants. These participants who were knowledgeable about the topic went through a "trial run" of answering the questions to ensure that the content was valid. Therefore, the feedback given from the "trial run" was taking into consideration with

making any necessary adjustments to the instruments. The instrument questions that were used in this study were designed to answer the research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I obtained approval from the IRB at Walden University (#10-29-20-0432174). I sought permission from the local district to conduct my research and the Informed Consent form was changed to relate to my setting in the IRB application. After 4 months, the IRB and the school district could not agree with the Memorandum of Agreement document to recruit teachers within the Washington D.C. school district, so the IRB suggested that I recruit participants through social media. As a result, I changed the IRB application to reflect this change. Once I received approval from the IRB, I posted a message in LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook educational groups, (there were some participants that were from the greater Washington D.C. area, but not from the school district that I am employed. where I am a member. I posted information about my research and requested participants for my study. Interested individuals were instructed to inbox me with their email addresses. After receiving the emails from teachers in my inbox, then I sent an email to each of them explaining the purpose of my research and sharing the approval of the IRB from Walden University to conduct my research.

The email sent to teachers explained the criteria to participate, the reason for contacting them, the purpose of the study, and request for volunteers to participate. A consent form was sent via email to all potential participants, and they were asked to respond with "I consent." I received a total of 13 responses, and they came within a

couple days. However, I selected the first 10 participants who responded. This is how I recruited or gained access to participants.

Interviews

A Zoom interview was used to collect data. The following steps were implemented to carry out the interviews; interviews consisted of demographics questions and 13 open-ended questions. Recruitment steps included: (a) an email was sent to teachers about the purpose of the interview and asking them to participate in the study (b) a login for Zoom and a consent form was emailed to teachers who agreed to participate in the study (c) provided dates and time slots for participants to sign up for their interviews (d) a reminder email were sent to those teachers who agreed to participate but had not signed up for their interview time slot and date. These are the steps I took to set up 10 interviews through Zoom. The duration of collecting the data was 2 weeks. Participants were informed that they may discontinue participation at any point in the study without penalty. Also, if there are any follow-ups needed, participants will be contacted via email to ask to participate in a follow-up. See Appendix A for the interview protocol and Appendix B and C for the interview questions for part 1 and 2.

The conceptual framework and the literature review informed the development of the interview questions. The email sent to participants explained the procedures of the interviews and time slots for teachers to sign up. Interview times were planned based on teacher's responses. The participants were told that the interviews were being audio recorded in advance and that they had the option to opt out at any time. Interviews were conducted via Zoom. I explained the purpose of the interview, terms of confidentiality,

the format of the interview, and the length of the interviews, which was about 45-60

minutes. I shared my contact information and prepared for recording the data by note

taking and the use of a recorder. The interview protocol was shared with everyone at the

beginning of each interview.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis involves research, categorizing, evaluating, coding, transcribing,

organization, and creating themes (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Analyzing data is an

ongoing process and should be done right after the time data has been collected

(Creswell, 2009; Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Analyzing data in a qualitative study is a

systematic approach to finding meaning (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). The qualitative data

analysis approach was followed to include all the components that lead to creating

themes and finding meanings. I also carried out open coding for each interview. I created

a table that recorded the codes and used it to help organize codes into categories and

themes to answer the research questions. Any discrepancies were handled by asking

participants the same question in a different way for any participants who did not

understand the question.

<div align="center">

Trustworthiness

</div>

Trustworthiness ensures the rigor and credibility of the study (Lincoln et al.,

1985). To improve trustworthiness, a researcher must observe the following elements:

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To establish credibility, I

used member checking to capture participants' beliefs, experience, and perceptions (Birt,

et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). A member checking is forwarding transcribed

interviews, summaries, or findings to the participants for their review to ensure that the responses given are not based on biases of the researcher (Birt et al., 2016). I ensured that I use these strategies to ensure trustworthiness.

The trustworthiness of a qualitative research study is determined through its credibility and transferability. Transferability means ensuring that future researchers and readers can assess the applicability of the findings to another setting through replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To determine transferability of this study, I provided rich and thick descriptions of the procedures and findings from the data collection and analysis. I provided detailed information about my experiences during data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although qualitative research is criticized for being nontransferable, by providing extensive information, other sites may be able to find resonance and support from this research.

I showed dependability through an audit trail, which is a collection of relevant documentation that serves as the second opinion of the processes and products of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Audit trails are an in-depth approach to illustrating that the findings are based on the participants' narratives and involve describing how you collected and analyzed the data in a transparent matter. I provided details of the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data. I recorded any interesting topics during the data collection and any thoughts, reasons, and explanations about coding (Manning, 2017).

I improved confirmability by ensuring the objectivity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used reflexivity to establish the conformability of the research. Through

reflexivity, the researcher reflects on the data collection and interpretation process and acknowledges changes within themselves as well as how these changes affected the research process (Palaganas et al., 2017). I shared any thoughts or changes within myself during the data collections process (Merriam, 2002). Data saturation occurred when there was enough data to answer the research questions of middle school teachers' perception of administrator support and teacher retention.

Ethical Procedures

It is important to protect participants ethically. I ensured that the participants' rights were treated with caution and respect. I received an approval from the IRB at Walden University (#10-29-20-0432174). Once approval was obtained, I recruited participants over social media (LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook); participants were given a consent form telling them of their rights, the purpose of the study, and the procedures that took place in the research. It also discussed the potential risks and benefits of their participation. Participants were told that if they decided to withdraw from the study, that they could do so without penalty. Participants were reassured that their information or responses would be kept confidential by ensuring that all documents did not include names or any information that could identify the participants. No participant withdrew from the study.

Teachers responded to the Informed Consent form that included confidentiality information. This form was provided to them via email and teachers were asked to respond via email by stating "I consent" and this was used as permission to participate in the study and along with sharing that their information was and would be kept

confidential. The data collection is stored electronically on my personal computer in the

hard drive or on an external drive. The security of the provisions was used to protect the

data during the initial data collection. The external hard drive was locked in a file cabinet

when not in use and on my personal computer, which was protected by a password to

ensure that the information is kept confidential. The data will be kept on file for 5 years.

After 5 years, the data will be shredded or deleted. The purpose of this data security

process is to protect the rights of the participants.

At the end of the interview process, there no incentives provided. Thank you,

cards were given to the participants, for taking the time to participate in my study. To

avoid any conflict of interest, this study focused on middle school teachers in which I do

not hold any supervisory responsibilities, nor do I have any interactions with these

teachers.

Summary

This qualitative basic study was organized to gather data to address middle school

teacher's perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition.

Participants were selected via social media such as, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

The data collection consisted of 10 interviews of middle school teachers over ZOOM and

researcher observations in journal notes. Data analysis will be done using open coding to

develop themes that can answer the research questions. In Chapter 4, the findings of the

data analysis are reported.

Chapter 4 Results

The purpose of this study was to explore middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. I conducted a basic qualitative study to fulfill the investigation. Three central research questions were aligned with the purpose of the study. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ 1 How do middle school teachers describe administrator support?

RQ 2 What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers leave their positions?

RQ 3 What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers stay in their positions? In Chapter 4, the focus of discussion is on the findings. Chapter 4 includes the setting, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary

Setting

Participants did not report any concerns about their settings. They were not affected by personal or organizational conditions that influenced their experience at the time of data collection that would have affected the interpretations.

Demographics

The description of the demographics and characteristics relevant to this study of the 10 participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics for Participants (N=10)

Characteristics	$N = 10$	%
Age		
18-24	0	0
25-34	1	10
35-44	7	70
45-54	2	20
Over 55	0	0
Gender		
Male	4	40
Female	6	60
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Ethnicity		
White	0	0
Hispanic or Latino	0	0
Native American or Indian	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	10
African American	9	90
Other	0	0
Education		
Associate Degree	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	2	20
Master's Degree	2	20
Professional Degree	4	40
Doctoral Degree	2	20
Certification		
Yes	9	90
No	0	0
I have a Provisional which allows me three years to obtain my certification	1	10
Grade level		
6th	0	0
7th	1	10
8th	5	50
6th ,7th	2	20
7th ,8th	1	10
6th-8th	1[*]	10
Subject taught		
Social Studies	4	40
Science	1	10
English/Language Arts	1	10
Math	3	30
Other (please specify other)	1[*]	10
Years of experience		
<1 year	0	0
1-5 years	0	0
5-10 years	2	20
10-15 years	2	20
15+ years	6	60

Note. All teachers have been teaching at least five years at 7th grade and above. [*]Special education/autism, teach all subjects

The demographics data in Table 1 include the age ranges, gender, ethnicity, education, grade level taught, subject taught, certification, and years of experience that. There were six participants that were from the greater Washington D.C. area. The other four participants' geographical locations are unknown Ten teachers participated in this study. Most teacher participants were in the age range of 35-55 ($n = 7$), and there were more females ($n = 6$) than males ($n = 4$). Most participants were African American ($n = 9$). All teachers were certified ($n = 9$), and one held a provisional license. Some of the participants had a professional degree ($n = 4$), which is a degree that has more credits than a master's degree. Teachers who taught eighth grade ($n = 5$) were represented the most. There were two of the teacher participants who taught multiple grade levels. The least grade represented in this study was seventh grade ($n = 1$). The major subject taught among the teacher participants was social studies ($n = 5$). The years of teaching experience differed among the participants. The majority teaching experience of the participants was in the range of 15 + years ($n = 10$). The overall characteristic of the teacher participants was kind, knowledgeable, and patient with the process of sharing information with me.

Data Collection

In this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 10 middle school teacher participants using Zoom. I initially stated in my study that I would use Skype, but I chose Zoom because in my experience the service is better on slow internet connections, and I wanted to be prepared for any connection issues. Additionally, I initially planned to obtain participants in the school district in Washington DC. However, the data collection needed

revisions due to a disagreement between Walden's IRB processors and the school district. After changes to procedures accepted by the IRB, I chose educational social media groups that I am a member of to recruit participants. Then, I sent a message to the groups seeking volunteers to participate in my study. I shared what my study was about and stated that if anyone was interested in participating in the study to please inbox me their email addresses. There were six participants from the greater Washington D.C. area and the other four participants' geographical locations are unknown. There were 13 teachers who responded to the invitational email. Out of the 13 teachers who responded, I chose the first 10 teachers who met the criteria for this study. I sent an email to the other three volunteers informing them that I had reached my participant limit and if I needed more participants that I would reach out to them to see if they would still be interested in participating in my study. Two out of the three volunteers responded and agreed that they would participate if needed. The other 10 participants all agreed to participate in the study by providing a response to my letter of invitation via email that included the informed consent letter with "I consent."

Data collection via Zoom took place as scheduled over a course of 2 weeks. I anticipated that the interviews would take place for approximately 45–60 minutes; however, the time frame varied among participants. The overall time frame of each interview was between 35–45 minutes including both the demographics and open-ended interviews. Some of the participants had more to share than others. Participants were able to engage in the online interview from any location that had wi-fi connection. There was one minor issue with the screen freezing during one of the interviews that lasted for about

3 seconds; other than that, there were no issues during the interviews. However, for the first three interviews, I forgot to ask participants to elaborate on some of their responses. Later, I had to call those participants back to elaborate on questions that I was unclear about their responses. Each interview was recorded through note taking and audio recording. The interviews were recorded using voice memo recording on my cellphone, because the recording device on my laptop was not working. There were no other variations in the data collections from the plan presented in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

Once I completed all interviews, I transcribed each audio-recorded interview by typing the responses word-for-word using Word on my computer. I labeled the files according to the participants' identifiers, which was a number that was assigned at the beginning of each interview that identified each participant. Names were not used to signify participants on either the transcripts or the recordings.

To ensure the efficacy of the transcriptions, I listened to the recordings along with reading the transcripts during the recording to make sure that I captured the responses accurately. Member checking was implemented by providing participants with a copy of their transcripts and one page of the preliminary findings to be reviewed via email. Participants were asked to respond to the email with any questions or concerns between 1–3 days of the email sent to complete the member- checking process. I did not receive any emails regarding any concerns or questions. However, I received four replies to the email about how thankful they were for being a part of the study and allowing them to speak their truth about the topic.

I then printed copies of each transcription to read, reexamine, and code the interview responses. I also read the notes that I took during the interviews twice to improve familiarity with the major points from the data. During the second reading, I highlighted relevant words, phrases, and sentences that had a direct link to addressing the research questions of the study. I applied the coding scheme to the remaining data. The texts from the data that had similar meanings were grouped under one code that directly addressed the research questions. Thus, a thematic coding analysis was used to analyze the interviews and journaling notes (Belotto, 2018; Toly et al., 2016; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Any discrepant data were factored in the data analysis, though no response was different enough to be considered discrepant.

During the analysis process, I read each transcript in its entirety without coding the first time. While reading the participants' transcripts a second time, I jotted down primary codes for emerging ideas or patterns. I used open coding to capture emerging ideas and then categorized ideas to develop themes. I finalized identifiying the major and minor themes. Coded ideas and patterns that occurred more frequently in one data source were considered as major themes. Themes that occurred less frequently in the same data source were considered as minor themes. I developed a description for each theme. Next, I compared the major themes from the two data sources. The major themes that were presented in both data sources were discussed, joined together, and presented as the primary results of the data.

Secondary codes were used to answer the research questions. I coded a total of 232 emerging ideas. To organize the coding, I created a code playbook that included the

research questions, codes (primary and secondary), and themes (see Appendix D). Then, I used this information to see how the responses answered the research questions. I color-coded the words and phrases in the transcripts to identify which of these answered each research question. I indicated Research Question 1 with green, Research Question 2 with blue, and Research Question 3 with yellow. I finalized the categories in which I copied and pasted the comments into each file folder and labeled each one to fit them into the category label to sort the data.

Lastly, I studied the categories and developed themes to present the aggregated data. There are seven primary themes: (a) instructional support from administrators, (b) school climate and culture, (c) emotional support, (d) lack of administrator support, (e) student behavior, (f) administrator support, and (g) love the job. A complete description of the codes (primary and secondary codes) and themes are listed in Appendix D. I present the findings according to the themes followed by answers to the research questions in the Results section.

Results

In this section, I present the findings related to the themes and discuss any discrepant cases. The data are organized by the seven themes that were created through the data analysis: instructional support, school climate and culture, emotional support, lack of administrator support, student behavior, administrator support, and love of the job. Specific examples of the data are included in this section in quotes of participants and explanation of the comments when relevant. The findings are presented according to the themes as well as an explanation of how the research questions were answered.

Theme 1: Emotional Support

One of the more salient themes that emerged from the data related to how middle school teachers describe administrator support was emotional support. Emotional support refers to administrators having open communication and showing appreciation, respect, or interest in their teachers' work and emotional well-being (Hughes et al., 2015). There were five teachers (P1, P5, P7, P8, P10) who spoke to the significance of emotional support in describing administrator support. These teachers spoke about their sense of feeling valued, being acknowledged, or celebrated, and being respected, showing empathy, being kind, showing appreciation, and principals engaging in "check-ins." Teachers described feeling valued as being acknowledged for the work that they do, open and ongoing communications, encouragement, and incentives received for the results of their work. As noted by P7,

> being supportive by being a good listener, show care and concerns for students
> and staff. Being empathetic, respectful, understanding, helpful, and understanding
> by providing professional development or role plays to support us in areas of
> classroom management and dealing with difficult parents.

A collaborative effort with teachers and administrator to resolve issues at the school level using data was also important, as P10 shared,

> Administrators should be collaborative by being able to have a dialogue with the
> teachers about student performance, along with workplace demands, and going
> over assessment data, because we are in a data-driven society with education. So
> going over that data, but then coming up with solutions for whatever issues may

occur within the classroom setting is very frustrating when we are not solution

oriented.

P10 also mentioned that they tried to share strategies with their administrators, and they

were treated as if they did not have time to meet with the participant:

My administrators only provided me with attention when the superintendent

acknowledged me for my students making double-digit gains on a district wide

math assessment. It took an administrator outside of my school to acknowledge

the work that I was doing at my school. All I wanted was to be acknowledged for

the hard work and to be listened to by my administrators.

Four out of the five participants (P8, P10, P1, P5) specifically used the phrase "check-

ins" as a key aspect of emotional support. The participants believed that administrators

should "check-in" with them periodically to see how they are doing to show that they

care about the staff. In general, teachers described "check-ins" as one-on-one experience

with their administrators. P10 mentioned that "check-ins were for instructional purposes."

P1 reported that "Check-ins are about the quality of the instruction, team, and lesson

planning important. This helps with the teacher and administrator being aligned with the

school community as well as instruction." P5 and P8 mentioned that having regular

"check-ins" meetings with teachers is how they described administrator support.

Administrator support was also described as making teachers feel valued,

according to the teachers in this study. P7 noted that "not only are check-ins with teachers

important, but administrators showing that they care about the success of their teachers

and acknowledging the work that they do are important as well." P7 became emotional

when asked to describe administrator support; their voice became elevated, and their

posture changed. P7 sat up straight and glared in the camera, expressing,

> Like help us through difficult times, provide support or examples of how to be an
>
> effective teacher, how to have great classroom management, show us how to have
>
> difficult conversations with parents, how to be problem solvers. These all can be
>
> professional developments, role-plays etc. … I just believe that the administrators
>
> can set their teachers up for success and acknowledge the work that we do all
>
> while showing that they care about their staff.

I asked P7 the reason behind the compassion in their voice when they provided the

response. She shared that "it becomes very frustrating when you work so hard and not be

acknowledge by your administrators for the work that you do." P6 shared a similar

perspective. She stated, "I expect my administrators to show various ways of appreciation

and acknowledge the great work that I do." Administrator support can be described in

various ways; however, the participants in this study shared that an important part of that

support is emotional support.

Theme 2: Instructional Support

Another theme that came from the data related to how middle school teachers

described administrator support was instructional support. Instructional support was an

essential part of support to the teachers in this study. Teachers believed that if

administrators provided instructional support to their teachers, that it would lead to being

successful in the classroom. Some examples of instructional support that were

highlighted by the teachers in this study included: professional development,

observations, feedback, and providing resources. Six study participants (P7, P5, P1, P8, P9, P10) mentioned that receiving support with instruction such as observations, feedback, provide resources, professional learning communities, collaborative time with colleagues, and professional development would help teachers improve on strengthening their areas of weakness. As noted by P5 in describing administrator support:

> …instructional support for example administrators needs to consistently conduct informal observation and provide "bite size" (small tasks of improvements) feedback before the formal observation, conduct follow up observations to ensure the teachers are making progress in the areas based on the feedback. This shows that the administrator is taking the initiative of supporting the teachers with improving in their area of weakness.

As P5 was explaining this example, they seemed very compassionate about receiving instructional support for the purpose of improvement. They explained in a way to show that all they wanted was the support needed to be the best they can be. They further shared that:

> It is like playing in a basketball game. The coach records the game and during practice time, he reviews the video of the game with his players, point out some errors, provide feedback, and provide strategies on how to do better. Then, provide time for the players to practice those strategies, follow-up, and give you more feedback in terms of, if you are making progress or not before the actual game, or in this case the formal observation. This is helpful, as an educator it lets me know that the administrator is investing in my career progression.

In describing administrator support, P8 shared that, "I expect for my administrators to be fair, firm, compassionate, available, and be good instructional leaders. Also, to provide us with resources like professional development related to our content areas, provide materials such as a printer, printer paper, in our classrooms."

Based on the responses, study participants want to receive feedback that will help them improve in their areas of expertise. Study participants 1, 7, 9, 10 all shared similar perspectives that administrators should provide feedback. For example, P9 mentioned that accurate feedback is important. They provided an example of how the administrator came to observe the classroom and gave feedback:

Give feedback that make sense and not just give me feedback just to give me feedback. I once received this feedback like, 'You need to differentiate. And I was marked down significantly, and when I asked this administrator, well, what does that look like? Because I know what differentiation means and I provided evidence of how I differentiated the lesson. The principal just slid a book across the table. It was not helpful to me at all. Especially during her observation of me, I observed her on her cell phone the entire time. So, I was wondering how valid the observation was. Administration must be present. The principal just slid a book across the table. It was not helpful to me at all.

In describing administrator support P7 mentioned the importance of the timeline when receiving feedback from the administrator. They mentioned,

Administrator support looks like administrators providing timely feedback. Don't just come to my room, observe, and I do not receive the feedback until two weeks

later. I would like to receive the feedback at least within two to three days of the observation, because it is fresh, I can reflect on the feedback and remember what I did within that timeframe, ask questions, and have ask for a follow up observation to ensure that I am on the right track with implementing the feedback provided from my administrator. I mean, I know that administrators are busy, but so are we as teachers. So, providing timely feedback is extremely important to me because I want to be the best at my craft.

Participant 7 was very agitated and frustrated when sharing a response. I asked them why they were so agitated when sharing a response and they said, "because I've had an experience with an administrator that provided me feedback three weeks later. It made me feel like I wasn't a priority. I welcome feedback, because as I stated earlier; I want to be the best at my craft." Similar responses were provided from other participants related to feedback. As stated before, P1 and P10 mentioned that feedback had similar responses. P1 shared, "administrators need to provide observations and give feedback that make sense and not just give me feedback just to give me feedback". P10 stated, "Administrators need to provide accurate feedback."

Theme 3: School Climate and Culture

Another major theme that emerged from the data regarding administrator support was School Climate and Culture. Teachers shared that the administrator needs to support teachers by creating a positive school culture that is safe, supportive, respectful, and have very few disciplinary problems. Administrators are responsible for creating a positive

environment that is conducive to learning. Teachers in this study mentioned that a positive school climate and culture played a role in their decision to stay at a school. School climate and culture in the context of this finding refers to the patterns of teachers, students, parents, and school personnel's experiences of the school and the reflection of the norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and organizational structures (Rudasil, 2017). School culture and climate in the context of this finding refer to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviors, and values that impact how the school operates. A positive school climate means to create a school environment that is conducive to effective learning for teachers and students, where they feel supported, safe, valued, and motivated to contribute to school improvement (Dernowska, 2017). Some of the teachers noted that school climate and culture included building relationships, providing emotional support such as feeling valued, celebrating teachers, being treated with respect, providing kind words, being motivational, and providing support with student behavior and problematic parents. Seven of the participants (P8, P3, P5, P1) related a positive school climate and culture to administrators implementing effective communication, supportive environment, strong and consistent disciplinary policies, respect, trust, and strategies for building positive relationships. Some of the teachers' responses about a positive school culture are as follow: P3 shared the description of a positive school culture and support. P3 stated that:

> A positive school culture and climate is when the administration fosters a working
>
> environment in which teachers feel welcome, teachers feel appreciated, teachers
>
> feel included in the day in and day out process of how a school runs, and how we

should collaborate with each other in order to build the strongest community

possible, and to create the best policies and procedures as a school community.

I asked P3 if they were experiencing this at their current school, and the reply was, "No,

our administration does not include us in the decision-making or welcome teacher input.

This frustrates me, because we are a part of the school community too and I want to be

treated as a valuable member of the school community." P5 in describing school culture

shared a similar perspective. She explained that:

> I have been in a school environment where the teacher morale was down, the
>
> school environment was not welcoming, nor did we feel appreciated by our
>
> administrators. For example, our administrators just gave us work along with
>
> deadlines. There were a lot of demands of meeting the deadlines with little
>
> explanations. As teachers we felt as if we were just giving all this work and with
>
> little time to do it, we felt we weren't appreciated or acknowledge for the great
>
> work that we did.

Building positive teacher morale can be a major challenge for administrators to work on

positive morale in the school. P5 offered more ideas for improving morale, we didn't get

a thank you, we appreciate you, or any type of appreciation. However, the administrators

did make the comment that this is the work that teachers are expected to do, and this is

what you signed up for. I did not like this approach and therefore, I chose not to be in an

environment where I was overworked and under appreciated, so I left that school.

Participant 5 also shared that administrator support includes providing help with the

school climate and culture. They were upset when sharing their experience. The

participant was very apologetic because of their elevated voice. The teacher explained

that their current administrators were very insensitive and did not treat the teachers as

experts, human beings, and valued members of the team. They also mentioned that they

felt as if their administrators treated them along with their colleagues as if they were

beneath them, as if they were at work to do what they were told. P8, in describing the

importance of a positive school climate and culture, included a few supports such as

administrators making themselves available to support, acknowledge or celebrate teacher

accomplishments, and help dealing with problematic parents. P8 went on to say:

> Often, we have irate parents that come to the school, and we need the support of
>
> our administrators to deal with them. I've had situations where I have been left
>
> alone to deal with an irate parent. The administrators were either not available or
>
> not in the building. I had to get another teacher to support me with the parent. I
>
> felt so disappointed in my leadership team, I felt as if I was on an island all by
>
> myself to resolve issues and that our school does not have a culture of unity or
>
> teamwork from the leadership team.

Some teachers in this study specifically mentioned the benefits of a positive school

climate and culture result in teachers remaining at their schools. P6, P7, and P10 shared

similar perspectives and noted that: "I would stay if I felt valued and appreciated for the

work that I do and supported by my leaders", P10 shared: "Being in a supportive

environment makes one feel as if they are valued for the time and effort that they put into

the job and of course," and P7 shared: "I would stay if I was being recognized or

celebrated by the leadership team and if there were leadership opportunities for teachers."

These responses from the teachers support the claims of teachers remaining in their positions if there is a positive school culture and climate.

Theme 4: Lack of Administrator Support

According to the participants in this study, the lack of administrator support was the most mentioned response for the reason for leaving a school. Teachers in this study believed that not receiving the necessary support from their administrators to be successful in their craft can be defined as an administrator not providing the support teachers need to be successful in the classroom. Teacher's responses (P1, P3, P6, P8, P9, P10, P5, P2) of some examples of lack of administrators support included: little to no support with instruction, student behavior, lack of emotional support. All the study participants stated that the lack of administrator support would be the reason why they would leave a school.

The lack of administrator support included not being acknowledged for the work teachers do, not being respected by their administrators, lack of leadership, and lack of support with student behavior. As noted, P1 mentioned several reasons for leaving a school, as being "administration, lack of leadership, lack of consistent accountability among students and staff. P1 elaborated by saying:

 Administration should provide support to teachers in areas such as instruction; administrators should be instructional leaders, be able to analyze data so that as a school community we are able to collaborate and create a plan that will address our areas of weaknesses for the sake of improving the school. Also, administrators need to be consistent and fair with holding students and staff accountable. The

administrators at my school show favoritism amongst staff and students…There is

not equity.

P1 seemed very agitated and very frustrated when providing responses regarding the lack

of administrator support. P1 later responded that at his "current school that his

administrators are very nasty and disrespectful to the staff, and this is the reason why they

want to leave their school." Study participant P 2 and P 10 shared a similar perspective.

P2 noted that: "Of course it would be not getting the support needed from my

administration and if I'm not being treated fairly by administration, then I am leaving"

and P10 noted: "disrespect on an administrator level, lack of administrator support, and if

I didn't feel like my contributions were valued." P10 added that,

I have been disrespected by one of my administrators on many occasions. My

administrator speaks to me with an aggressive tone and never has anything

positive to say. I try to avoid interactions with my administrator, because it brings

down my motivational spirits. Engaging with her is very stressful.

The lack of administrator support mentioned by P4 was:

The amount of support that I feel like I got from the administrators or the lack

thereof; like I need to feel like the administration have my back, my best interest

in mind, and support me. For example, if I need support with handling a parent

who is out of control or support with a student who is disrupting my class and

need to be removed.

P8 similarly said, "I expect to get support from my administrator." P8 also shared that the

reasons why they would leave a school were because they lacked support from

administrators, clear academic structure, academic accountability, and clear school

culture expectations such as behavior management rules and policies. They added,

> I need a student to be held accountable when they break the rules, I need the
>
> support when I am trying to handle situation with a student that has consistently
>
> broken the behavior rules and I have followed the necessary steps to document
>
> behavior.

According to the data of this study all participants desire support from their

administrators and will leave if they are not receiving support.

Theme 5: Student Behavior

The data results showed that student behavior was a deciding factor of teachers

leaving their positions. In this study teachers described student behavior as being

misconduct within the classroom that disrupts the learning environment. Student behavior

was aligned to the school culture, according to the teachers in this study. Some examples

of student behavior included: physical aggression/attacks towards teachers, fighting, and

disrespectful.

Administrators are responsible for making sure that there are structures and

systems in place in a school community. These structures should be implemented

effectively and enforced to maintain a positive school culture. A positive school culture

creates an atmosphere that is welcoming, safe, and supportive. However, the teachers in

this study shared their experiences of the school environment that was the opposite of a

positive school culture. Most of the experiences were related to students' behavior, and

this was a dominant reason for teachers' decisions to leave their jobs.

There were six teachers (P3, P4, P5, P6, P2, P8) who spoke to the significance of student behavior and how their behavior affects the school culture and climate among other factors. According to P4, support with student behavior is a huge part in creating a positive school culture. P4 shared: "It would be helpful to have administrators visible in hallways and actually support with moving students along to class, help with student behaviors consistently." During her interview, she had such compassion in her voice, her body language changed from relaxed to tense, and her eyes became bigger when she described the support, she needed with student behaviors and in the hallways. She mentioned that "teachers and administrators should work together as a team, to be on the same page, and to present as a united front. I asked her why her body language, voice, and eyes became wider when she mentioned student behavior. She replied, "I was attacked by a student during transition or the changing of classes and there was no one on the hallway to support me. So, I am a huge advocate of having support when transitions or the changing of classes for the sole purpose of climate control and safety."

P3 noted reasons for leaving a school,

> One reason I would leave a school would be because of the lack of administrative support when it comes to school culture and climate, and parental engagement, and student behavior. For instance, at my school I have felt a since of being a stranger. Meaning that we do not have a welcoming atmosphere. Our administrators do not greet our students as they enter the building; staff does not speak to one another nor are the guest welcomed in the building. We do not have

strong systems in place to keep student behavior intact and students aren't being held accountable for their actions.

P3 seemed very agitated when she provided this response. She shifted in her seat and her facial expression changed from pleasant to angry. I asked her why did her body language and facial expression change. She stated, "because experiencing the disconnect between the administration, staff, and students was very disheartening." She went on to explain how she had left a previous school because of the school climate. Other participants shared similar responses to P3 related to the school culture being the reasons why teachers leave their positions. For example, P6 shared:

The school culture and climate and I mean more so of the student discipline which affects the school culture and climate. This would be a reason why I would leave, meaning if the school is not welcoming and no strong structure, routines, and procedures put in place, like dismissal, arrival, lunch, hallway transitions etc. for the sake of order of the school. Therefore, students are fighting and being disrespectful. If the school environment is not set up for teaching and learning, lacking effective leadership, difficult class schedule (large class sizes), unsafe environment, meaning student discipline all these things would influence me to leave a school. How can a school function effectively if all these systems are failing? It can't the school would be in total chaos, and I wouldn't be able to function properly in a dysfunctional environment.

During P6's response, I jotted down the notes of her taking a long pause before answering the question. I asked her after her response why did she pause when before

answering the question, and she replied: "because I've been in a school where it was chaotic and there were no strong systems in place, which made the school unsafe, and the leadership was very weak. I promised myself that I would never teach in an environment like this again. So, the long pause reminded me of the bad experience I had in a school."

It is important to note that school climate and culture also includes creating a culture around attendance and the academics of students. P4 also noted that reasons for teachers leaving their positions were:

The lack of clear academic structure, academic accountability, and clear school culture expectations. Clear expectations are important because it provides an understanding of what to do and what is expected of students and staff. If those expectations are not clear, then it causes confusion. This happened at one of my school's that I worked at years ago. The principal wasn't clear on the curriculum expectations, the grading policy, or the norms surrounding the culture and climate of the school. So, you can imagine how chaotic this school was. We had behavior issues, it was unsafe to be there, and teachers were not showing up to work. It was so awful that I quit in the middle of the school year. I couldn't take the stress another day.

It is important to have that support from your leaders because teachers want to know that the principal has their best interest in mind. Teachers in this study shared that support from their administrators is vital in remaining in their positions. P2 and P8 noted similar perspectives and noted: "I feel like my administration does not spend enough time supporting us with dealing with student behaviors or parents when we need them to, they

send students back to class when they have disrupted the class environment" and P8

shared: "No leadership support. Like, if the leaders of the school did not provide support

instructionally, emotionally, dealing with student behavior, no help with problem solving,

and no help with dealing with difficult parents, then I would leave." P5 was the only

participant that mentioned his reasons for leaving a school was: "not being appreciated,

overworked, and not being valued as an employee." These responses from the teachers

support the claims of the lack of administrator support with student behavior which is

aligned with the school culture and climate is reasons for teachers leaving their positions

at their school.

Theme 6: Administrator Support

The data results showed that all participants in this study mentioned that

administrators that showed or displayed support would be one of the reasons why they

would stay in their positions. Teachers mentioned that receiving support from their

administrators made them feel valued, and a part of the school community or family.

There were 10 teachers who spoke to the significance of administrator support in

describing reasons teachers staying in their positions. According to the teachers in this

study (P2, P6, P3, P5), some examples of administrator support included: Instructional

support such as professional development, observations, feedback, and resources, student

behavior support, parent support as supporting with difficult parents, emotional support

such as feeling valued, celebrated, and teachers given a voice. As shared by P2 reasons

for staying at a school are:

>If I'm getting the support from my academy leaders, lead leaders, and the administrators, it makes a whole lot of difference. When I've gotten administrator's support, I noticed that my work ethics were better. I joined committees, volunteered more, and stayed late to support with certain programs at times. The supports made me feel valued.

P6 shared a similar perspective and noted that:

>"I would stay if I felt valued and appreciated for the work that I do and if I was supported by my leaders. Supported in ways like, celebrate me for the work that I do, support me with students with bad behavior, irate parents, instructionally by providing me with professional development, conduct observations and giving me feedback, conduct check-ins just to see how I am doing personally and professionally."

Differentiated professional development was important to one of the participants who was a special educator. P3 shared that "I need differentiated professional development to remain in my position at my school, because it will aid in being better at what I do. That would be the deciding factor if I would stay or go. Differentiated professional development is training that is tailored-made for teachers in the areas of content (i.e., modified curriculums), for the population of student's teachers teach, and specific resources provided to support students. "Special education is ever changing, and I need to be abreast of the current trends and best practices. If I received the support from the administration like this, then I would stay because I would feel like I am a part of a family and that the work that I do is being taken seriously."

Support from leaders is important according to the teachers in this study, however, there are other factors that P5 mentioned that would influence him to stay in his position. He shared: "I would stay at a school if teachers were receiving support from the leadership team, but also if the job is convenient to where I live, the pay is good, and that the school provided supplies." These responses from the teachers support the claims of teachers what administrator support would encourage them to remain at their schools.

Theme 7: Love for the Job

The findings indicated that five study participants spoke to the significance of love for the job in describing reasons teachers remain in their positions. Love for the job in the context of this finding refers to a passion for the work itself. Based on responses of the teachers, some examples of love of the job included: liking the staff and students and liking the subject they teach. Five participants (P5, P6, P7, P3, P8) mentioned their love for the job was a reason they would remain in their positions. For example, P7 noted: "I would stay if I had cool co-workers, love of students at school, and loving what I teach." Participants 5 and 6 stated that they would stay at their schools if they loved their students. P5 noted: "I would stay at a school if I loved the students, community, teachers." P6 mentioned that she would stay at a school because she loved students/children. She explained further that she loves to study with them. She noted: "It could be so many good reasons and so many factors. Of course, I love the students, and I love the children. I love to study with them. P3 and P8 mentioned that they would stay at their schools if they liked their jobs. These responses supported the claims of teachers loving their jobs being a reason to remain in their position at their school.

In this basic qualitative research, I interviewed 10 middle school teachers recruited in local districts using social media. The goal was to address the problem of attrition of teachers. The interview questions focused on teachers' perceptions of administrator support and the reasons teachers may choose to leave or stay at a school. I provided a rich description of participants' responses including quotations to support the themes. These themes are included in the summary and the answers to the three research questions at the end of Chapter 4. In Chapter 3, I stated that if there were any discrepancies, it would be handled by asking participants the same questions in a different way for any participants who do not understand the question. I did not have to ask the same questions in a different way with any of the participants. There were times when participants asked me to repeat a question and I repeated the question, and the participant provided a detailed response. These participants were #10 (asked to repeat question 10), #3 (asked to repeat question 12), and #9 (ask to repeat question 13). However, there were no discrepant cases in this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As stated in Chapter 3, to improve trustworthiness, a researcher must observe the following elements credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure the quality of the study. I used the plan included in chapter 3 and demonstrated credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in this study. In this section the focus discussion is on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

As stated in Chapter 3, to establish credibility, I used member checking. I forwarded the transcribed interviews and findings to the participants via email for their review and asked them to respond to the email if there were any discrepancies in the responses captured or if they did not agree with the findings based on their responses within 1-3 days of the email. There were four replies to the email, but they were not in disagreement with the information shared. Instead, they were thanking me for allowing them to be a part of the study and giving them a voice to speak their truth about administrator support. I also, used participants' quotes in the results. This is how I was able to establish credibility in this study.

Transferability

As stated in Chapter 3, the trustworthiness of a qualitative research includes transferability. To determine transferability of this study, I provided thorough descriptions of the findings by presenting and thoroughly explaining the coding process, I included rich descriptions details about the participants responses, their work experiences, and perceptions. I believe that other sites may be able to find resonance and support from this research and allow for transferability of ideas to other settings.

Dependability

I showed dependability through use of an audit trail, in which I collected relevant documentation that served as transparent description of the research process. I provided details of the data collection. My main data collection method was interviews and my research journal. During the data collection I recorded participants responses, jotted down

notes of behaviors, tones, body language that were noticed when answered specific questions in my research journal. These are the strategies used to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

I worked to establish confirmability by ensuring the objectivity of the study using reflexivity; by using my reflexive research journal to record my on-going thoughts of what is happening in the research process. I did this by jotting down notes during interviews about participants' comments, thoughts, body language, and tone when answering questions. I also, wrote memos directly after interviews and I continued editing subjective statements throughout the process.

As I reflected on the data collection and interpretation process, I went into the process with a discouraged attitude because I initially completed my IRB application with obtaining my participants from a local school district. However, there were so many setbacks with the paperwork as the school district and IRB could not come to an agreement. This caused so much wait time in the process. After 3 months of wait time, it was suggested to me by the IRB Committee Chair to obtain my participants through social media because this route would not require permission from a school district. I followed the suggestion and was approved by the IRB to move forward with the research. Going into the process of obtaining participants, I felt defeated and discouraged because I felt like I was starting over and wasted too much time.

As soon as I receive approval, the next day I reached out to potential participants on social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, and people responded right away! I was overwhelmed with amazement. Nevertheless, I moved forward with the

process and my attitude lightened a little. I still worried if the individuals would follow through with the process and they did. During the first three interviews, I was nervous. I wanted people to feel comfortable and share their truths about the study. Once, participants shared their responses and experiences, my nervousness eventually went away because I could relate to their experiences and feelings about the study. Due to the nervousness, for the first three interviews, I inadvertently forgot to ask participants to elaborate on some of their responses. Later, I had to call those participants back to elaborate on questions that I was unclear about their responses. I was very thankful that they were nice enough to provide me with the elaborated responses that I needed. Sharing and being transparent of my thoughts, emotions, and changes that occurred in the data collection process demonstrates the reflexivity to establish the confirmability of the research.

Summary

Adequate data were aggregated to thoroughly answer the three research questions in this study. Middle school teachers had the opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences about the study. By exploring the perceptions of middle school teachers about administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition, I addressed three research questions. There were 7 different themes that emerged from the data. The research questions and the data results showed for Research Question 1 that teachers described administrator support as being administrators providing instructional support, emotional support, and support with the school's climate and culture. For Research Question 2, the emerging themes were the lack of administrator support and student

behavior. All ten of the teachers who participated in this study stated that they would leave their position if they were not receiving support from their administrators. Teachers also mentioned that they would like to like to receive instructional support from their administrators in the form of observations, feedback, and check-ins to get an understanding of what is needed for them to perfect their craft or role as a teacher. Lastly, for Research Question 3, the themes that developed from the data were administrator support, and love of the job. Teachers shared that receiving support from their administrators is a vital contributing factor in retaining teachers. All ten teachers who participated in this study stated that they will remain in their positions if they were receiving supports from their administrators. This support means creating an environment that is welcoming, safe, and one that supports with handling student misbehavior. These are components that teachers related to the school culture and climate. Teachers expressed that if the school climate is safe and that they felt supported with student behavior or supported with difficult parents. In addition, teachers believed that receiving support with instruction, feeling valued, treated with respect, provided with resources, and having a love for the job would be a deciding factor in staying in their position.

In Chapter 5, I provide discussion, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. This section also included the summary and interpretation of the key findings. These findings are described in ways that confirm, disconfirm, or extend the knowledge in the discipline.

Chapter 5 Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this of basic qualitative study was to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher attrition, and teacher retention. This can provide administrators with specific feedback from teachers of the various types of support needed to retain teachers. Seven themes emerged from this study that answered the research questions. The key themes that emerged for Research Question 1 were: (a) emotional support, (b) instructional support, and (c) school culture and climate. The key findings for Research Question 2 were (a) lack of administrator support and (b) student behavior. The key findings of Research Question 3 were (a) administrator support and (b) love of the job. The implications of findings, social change, description of methodological, empirical implications, analysis regarding the theoretical framework (as appropriate), and recommendations (as appropriate) are discussed in this chapter.

Interpretation of the Findings

There were three research questions for this study to get a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. The key findings of this study centered around seven themes: (a) emotional support, (b) instructional support from administrators, (c) school climate and culture, (d) lack of administrator support, (e) student behavior, (f) administrator support, and (g) love of the job. These items are discussed and connected to related literature in the following sections.

Emotional Support

Based on the findings, half of the teachers in this study spoke to the significance of emotional support in describing administrator support. Emotional support refers to administrators having open communication and showing appreciation, respect or interest in their teachers' work, and emotional well-being (Berkovich et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2015). In describing emotional support, the teachers spoke about their sense of feeling valued, being acknowledged, or celebrated for their accomplishments, being respected, and principals engaging in "check-ins" for the sake of checking on their well-being. The findings related to emotional support from this study is consistent with previous research showing that teachers perceived support through individual recognition, support, or visits in their classrooms when there are specific projects, which is a catalyst for teacher retention (Lambeth, 2015). The findings are also consistent with research suggesting that emotional support could pertain to the need for teachers to feel valued in the school (Burke et al., 2015). Based on the findings of the current study, administrators should set aside time to recognize or acknowledge their teachers for the work that they do. Doing so would demonstrate to teachers that they are being appreciated, valued, and acknowledged for all their efforts by their administrators, and this may lead to teacher retention at their schools.

Instructional Support from Administrators

Instructional support was also essential to teachers in this study when describing administrator support. Instructional support refers to providing professional development, resources, informal and formal classroom observations, and feedback (Bates & Morgan,

2018; Ion et al., 2019; Woodland & Mazur, 2019; Zepeda et al., 2017). Teachers shared

that the administrators need to provide instructional support to their teachers and that this

support would lead to teacher success in the classroom. More than half of teachers in this

study mentioned that having observations and receiving meaningful feedback, resources,

and professional development would help teachers improve or strengthening their weaker

areas of instructional concerns. These findings align with several researchers. For

example, Campbell (2017) found that teachers want to be observed and provided with

useful feedback as well as have professional development opportunities that will help

them grow into their roles. Hughes et al. (2015) also found that the lack of instructional

support was one of the reasons teachers were more likely to leave the field than those

who had more accolades or support. Additionally, Smetackova, (2017) found that

providing adequate materials to teacher is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction

and lowers stress among teachers. Moreover, Woodland et al., (2019) found that

administrators have the most influential decision-making on the structure of instructional

support such as peer collaboration or professional learning communities. Based on the

findings of the current study, teachers want administrators to support them with

instruction by providing them with useful feedback, professional development, and

resources. These supportive practices may increase teacher retention at their schools.

School Climate and Culture

Teachers also described administrator support as leaders providing support by

creating a school culture that is safe, supportive, and respectful. School culture and

climate encompasses all the attitudes, social interactions, expected behaviors,

relationships, and values that impact how the school operates (Rudasill et al., 2018). A positive school climate means to create a school environment that is conducive to effective learning for teachers and students, where they feel supported, safe, valued, and motivated to contribute to school improvement (Dernowska, 2017). Some of the teachers described administrators building positive relationships, providing emotional support such as making teachers feel valued, celebrating teachers, and being treated with respect, having a teacher voice by being able to share input regarding decisions made about the school and the curriculum, and providing support with student behavior and problematic parents. Over half of the teachers in this study reported that administrators were key to creating a school environment that is welcoming and safe, which is supported by previous research (McMahon et al., 2017; Teasley, 2017). The greater support from administrators for teachers results in lowering teacher attrition and teacher transfers (Coleman, 2019; McMahon et al., 2017). Meeting the requirements of a positive school culture, administrators would display professionalism, high standards for students and staff, and a collaborative community.

Lack of Administrator Support

Based on the findings, teachers are more likely to leave their positions due to the lack of administrator support. This was described as lack of observations, meaningful feedback, peer collaboration, professional learning communities, lack of support with student behavior, being disrespected, lack of resources, and not making themselves accessible. Lack of administrator support impacts teachers emotionally and leaves them without support regarding concerns with students and parents and school policies

(MacMahon et al., 2017). According to the current study, teachers want to feel that their administrators "have their backs" by showing empathy, being understanding and kind, respectful, and showing teachers that they are valued as employees. Principals can provide emotional support to teachers by implementing supportive communication strategies like empathetic listening (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018), which teachers in this study indicated would give them a voice about school matters. Teachers in the current study also suggested that the lack of administrator support restricts them from being as successful in their area of expertise. For teachers to remain at their schools, administrators must provide teachers with adequate support (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Grant, 2017; Holmes et al., 2019; McMahon et al., 2017). By providing adequate support, teacher retention in schools may improve and attrition may be lessened.

Student Behavior

The results revealed that a school culture that does not have strong systems in place leads to teachers leaving their positions or would influence them to leave their positions. Over half of the teachers in this study related the school climate and culture to student behavior. The results also revealed that teachers want to be a part of school community that is safe with emphasis on receiving support with student behavior. They believed that not having administrator support with student behavior made their school environment unsafe, unwelcoming, discouraging, lack of respect and trust, and uncaring. The specifics of students' behavior that were shared in this study were fighting, disrespect toward the teacher, and disrupting the class environment. Teachers also mentioned that student misconduct was a major factor in deciding to leave their positions.

Teachers are seeking support from their administrators to discipline students who break the disciplinary rules and policies.

These finding were aligned with previous research such as Holmes et al. (2019), who mentioned that there has been a rise in aggressive and abusive behaviors of students in schools toward teachers. They noted that these behaviors have resulted in increased stress levels and burnouts of teachers. But administrators providing support to teachers with addressing inadmissible student behavior consistently will provide students with an understanding of the expectations and increase teachers' desires to remain in their positions. These findings were also supported by Britton (2018), who reported that, from teachers' perspectives, student behavior has an impact on the school culture and that administrators can change the negative impact student behavior has on the school culture by incorporating positive changes throughout the school community. The positive changes mentioned were consistently applying school discipline policies to all students, creating professional learning communities for collaboration, shared leaderships, and building positive relationships.

Administrator Support

All participants in this study shared that receiving support from their administrators would be one of the reasons why they would remain in their position. Teachers mentioned when administrator support is provided, they feel valued. Teachers in this study also shared that receiving support in the areas of instruction, student behavior, receive resources, professional development, peer collaboration, acknowledged for their accomplishments, treated with respect, show empathy, and support with

unmanageable parents are more likely to stay in their positions at their schools. Providing

teachers with support includes improving work conditions (with paying great attention to

school leadership), collaboration, incorporating teachers' voice with decision making,

and providing support in instruction with resources (Podolsy et al., 2017).

Love of the Job

An additional key finding of Research Question 3 was the love for the job. Half of

the teachers stated that they remained in their positions because of their love for the job.

Their love of the job was described as having "cool coworkers," loving the students,

loving what they teach, and just loving what they do as an educator. Based on teachers'

responses of their experiences shared in this study, being able to work in a community

that shares the same values, beliefs, and norms between the teachers and administrators

results in teacher retention. These findings were aligned with previous research indicating

that having a love for teaching was one of the reasons teachers remained in their positions

at their schools (Holmes et al., 2019).

Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory as the

theoretical framework. I investigated the connection between the ecological system

theory and teachers' perception of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition.

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1986) believed that individuals are influenced by their

environment. He separated the environments into five systems. These systems are the

microsystem (individual's surroundings), macrosystem (culture of individual's

environment), mesosystem (a link between two microsystems), exosystem (their setting), and chronosystem (individual's lifetime experience).

Each ecological system influences and are linked with one another. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the microsystem is the most closely connected system because it consists of relationships with families, school, peers, communities, and work. The next layer of the ecological system is the mesosystem. The mesosystem encompasses the interactions of two or more microsystems. Relationships within the mesosystem include linkages between peers and family and family and community. Another layer of the ecological systems theory is the exosystem, where there is an interconnection between two or more of the other systems. The settings do not necessarily include the individual; however, the events in the immediate settings are influential on the individual's growth. The macrosystem is the ecological system that is composed of an individual's cultural patterns, values, beliefs, and ideas. The final level of the ecological systems theory is the chronosystem. The chronosystem is the transition and shifts of life events of an individual.

Teachers are a part of an educational system, and this system influences them just as a child can be influenced by their environment (Brownell & Smith, 1993). Teachers can be influenced by the culture of their schools and administrators are expected to support with the happenings in their classroom, situations throughout the school community, outside influences that are related to the school, teachers, students, parents, and the culture of their school. Administrators play a vital role in leading the culture of their schools as well as providing the support teachers may need to influence retention.

The analysis of this current study revealed that there were relations to the ecological systems theory of the microsystem, mesosytem, exosystem, and the chronosystem. This study also revealed that most teachers believed that the microsystem influenced their school environment the most. The microsystem included teachers' experiences that occurred in the classroom that needed support from their administrators. The supports needed were: instructional support, resources, emotional support, and student behavior. Teachers' expectations of instructional support from administrators were on-going informal and formal observations along with timely feedback so that they can reflect and improve on instructional practices. Other teachers' expectations included: professional development, and collaboration with peers. Classroom responsibilities can be overwhelming and emotional for teachers. According to this study, teachers expect administrators to provide "check-ins" just to see how they are doing or to check on their well-being periodically. A teachers' immediate environment (microsystem) can be very influential on their feelings and the decision making of their positions.

Teachers in this study provided relations to the macrosystem (school culture). The school culture was in relations to the events that occurred within the classroom as well and influenced the larger school climate such as teachers not feeling valued, teacher's not being celebrated, low teacher morale, and difficulties with student behavior. This study revealed that student behavior was aligned to school culture. Teachers mentioned that the culture of the school becomes negative when there is a lack of administrator support with holding students accountable for their misbehavior. When an administrator does not have control of their school climate, it results in teachers leaving their positions according to

the teachers in this study. When an administrator has a positive influence on the school culture, teachers, students, and administrators reap the benefits: Teachers remain in their positions, student achievement increases, teacher retention rates at their schools may improve. An additional relation to this study was the exosystem (school district/resources). In this study teachers mentioned that they would feel supported if they had resources. Resources are required to operate and educate students. Resources require money and these funds can come from the state, local, or federal funding. Some federal fundings are designed to support low-income families/students academically, the special education population, and English language learners (Knight, 2019). Federal grants are allocated to school districts based on the needs of students and one of the needs is for teachers to remain in their positions. Teacher attrition is a problem across the country and hiring highly qualified teachers is a major concern when it comes to student achievement (Morgan et al., 2018). Nationally, funds are not being distributed equally among high poverty and high minority schools and inexperienced teachers are being hired in these schools (Knight, 2019). Therefore, adequate funds can provide teachers with the necessary resources needed to be successful in the classroom.

Teachers produced very little information that might be related to the mesosytem. However, some teachers mentioned that the administrator-teacher relationships or interactions (mesosystem) were strained due to the unfair treatment or the disrespect from their administrators. The interactions with their administrators were limited or avoided by the teacher due to the negative administrative behavior.

Lastly, relations to the chronosystem were reasons teachers would leave or stay in their positions. All teachers in this study stated that they would leave their positions due to the lack of administrator support. Administrator support was very significant to all of the teachers in this study. Teachers stated that they wanted to feel as if their administrators have their best interest at heart and that they are valued for the work that they do. When teachers are receiving the support that they need, then they will not leave their jobs. All teachers in this study, stated that they would remain in their positions if they were receiving administrators support. Teachers included that they felt supported when they: felt valued, celebrated, was a part of a positive school climate, had student behavior support, received support with problemed parents, and were provided resources. According to the teachers in this study, administrator support is the contributing factors that lead to teachers leaving or staying in their positions.

This framework was appropriate for this study. The focus was on teachers' perspectives on administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. According to the literature review, teachers are influenced by their environments (the ecological systems theory) and in this study, several entities were contributing factors of teachers deciding to leave or remain in their positions. Although, this framework was appropriate for this study, perhaps, future studies should seek to use other theoretical frameworks such as Self-Efficacy which focuses on an individual's ability to have control over their own motivation, behavior, and social environment (Bandura, 1997; Chang & Englehard, 2015; Gangloff & Mazilescu, 2017; Raath, 2016; Senler, 2016) or Situated Theory which focuses on what humans see, learn, and do is situated in their position in a community

(Lave et al., 1991). This may encourage the exploration of teachers' control of situations that occur with them on their jobs or with them personally.

Limitations of the Study

This study had a few limitations. First, this study had a sample size of 10 teachers and was limited to middle school teachers. The small sample size also limits the generalizability of the findings to other teachers and school settings (Tipton et al., 2016). A second limitation was that the study did not include a diverse sample of teachers. This study included limitations with the age range. The teachers were all African Americans except for one Asian. Most teachers were in the age group of 35-44 and had 15+ years of teaching experience. Even though there were limitations for this study, I was still able to collect in-depth data from teachers that provided an understanding of middle school teacher's perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. The findings provided important insights that could still be helpful in improving administrator-teacher relationships and teacher retention.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations that could be made based on the findings for future studies. First, I recommend using a larger sample. Doing so, would allow for the collection of data from more teachers in a variety of middle school settings across the country which would facilitate the transferability of the findings. Secondly, I recommend as a part of future studies, including a more diverse group of teachers from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and a variety of age ranges.

By having a more diverse group of teachers, the transferability of findings would assist with providing a rich description of teachers from various backgrounds. Thirdly, I recommend using a mixed- method approach that would include the collection of both, qualitative data via interviews and focus groups, and quantitative data using a survey. Using this approach would allow for the collection of data from a larger sample of people and at the same time provide rich contextual information using the qualitative data. By using both, may help with developing a thorough understanding of the topic of study (Creswell, 2016).

Implications

Implications for social change from this study could positively impact how administrators support teachers and potentially reduce teacher attrition. This study revealed that teachers are more likely to leave their positions due to the lack of administrator support and it also revealed that when teachers feel that they are receiving the necessary supports from their administrators, then teachers are remaining in their positions.

Most of the findings of this study seemed to center around the importance of soft skills of administrators. Soft skills include interpersonal (people) skills, communication skills, listening skills (Borner et al., 2018; Patacsil et al., 2017). Some examples of soft skills are empathy, respect, regular check-ins, communication, teamwork, flexibility, collaboration, integrity, leadership, and professionalism (Borner et al., 2018; Deeming, 2017). Administrators can use these skills to promote a positive school community that could build positive relationships with teachers, by using open and on-going

communication, collaboration or teamwork that encourages and values teachers through the appreciation of their feelings, showing empathy, and trust (Hill, 2017). The findings from the current study were in alignment with Abbas et al., (2018) who found in their study that leaders using soft skills had a positive impact on the progress of the school community. By using soft skills consistently in school communities, administrators may influence teacher retention in their schools.

According to Adnot (2016), Cheng (2019), and Farmer (2019), research suggests that some of the challenges due to the lack of administrator support contributes to the low student performance, creates a negative shift in the school culture, and results in hiring teachers who are less qualified to fill those positions. Yilmaz et al. (2016) explained that administrator supports influence teacher retention and play a significant role in the decisions of teachers leaving or staying in their positions. Grant (2017) also found that teachers who reported that they had the support of their principals, significantly influenced teacher retention in their schools. Therefore, creating a professional development for administrators related to soft skills might be needed to address the gap in research by building or enhancing these kinds of skills in administrators to promote positive communities, build positive relationships with teachers, and perhaps bring about a social change that could potentially lead to a reduction in teacher attrition.

Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications

The methodological theoretical, and empirical implications were appropriate for this study. A basic qualitative study was appropriate for this research study. This study helped with the exploration of understanding middle school teachers (participants)

experiences as well as their beliefs, attitudes, and ideas (Merriam, 2019; Thorne, 2016). The basic qualitative study also granted me with the opportunity to conduct interviews with individuals to obtain an understanding of middle school teachers' responses, and to address the problem in this study.

The conceptual framework used for this study was based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The framework in this study focused on the experiences of teachers' environments and its effects on teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. This study revealed that the relations of the ecological system was with the microsystem (classroom), mesosystem (interactions with students, parents, teachers, administrators), macrosystem (school culture), exosystem (school district/resources), and chronosystems (teachers' decision to leave or remain in their positions). The conceptual framework helped with answering the research questions in this study.

The empirical implication of the findings in this study is that middle school teachers were aware of why teachers decide to leave or stay in their positions. They provided vital information about their perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition. My goal for this study was to get a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and attrition through teachers' experiences and the changes that occurred from those experiences. Teachers' perceptions and real-life experiences also helped with answering the research questions in this study.

To address the findings of this study, a professional development could be created in relation to soft skills for administrators. This could possibly help with building or

enhancing administrators' interpersonal skills so that they can be implemented throughout school communities. Perhaps, this may influence teachers' decisions to leave or remain in their positions.

Conclusion

Teacher attrition has been a problem across the United States for decades, and one of the reasons is due to the lack of administrator support. As the educational front-line workers who inspire students' academic success, teachers serve as both role models and curriculum specialists. With all the responsibilities that are expected of teachers, support and encouragement from administrators are needed to boost morale and validate teachers' feelings of importance in and outside of the classroom. Teachers want to feel appreciated, valued, and celebrated for the work that they do and when support is shown by their administrators, it motivates them to continue doing their jobs (Berkovich, 2020). This current study has shown that teachers expected administrator support in areas to assist emotionally, instructionally, and with school culture. Based on these findings, a professional development related to soft skills is suggested for administrators to learn how to support teachers to ensure that they feel valued, safe, respected, supported instructionally, and celebrated or acknowledged for their accomplishments. These professional developments will incorporate soft skills that include empathy, regular check-ins, communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, flexibility/adaptation, collaboration, leadership, verbal praise or acknowledgement, and constructive feedback. Teachers confirmed soft skills to be the most important. These skills can contribute to positive school culture, and without them, having many resources would not make them

compatible for effective teaching and retention of teachers. The soft skills professional development could possibly provide administrators with hands-on experiences of practicing how to effectively implement soft skills to support teachers. Creating a soft skills professional development and encouraging administrators to implement those skills within their school communities, may influence a positive social change by lowering the teacher retention rates across school districts. I conclude that if teachers and administrators were on the same page in terms of what administrator support looks like, they could plan for incorporation of soft skills to build upon teacher-administrator relationships and promote collaboration. Implementing soft skills practices may aid in shaping the support of teachers and increase teacher retention.

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Appendix A: Protocols for Individual Interviews

1. The facilitator will begin with introductions: Welcome participant(s) and introduce myself.

2. Distribute and explain consent forms to participants. Share that all information will be kept confidential.

3. Provide a brief overview of the study and goals for the interviews: "Today we will be discussing, middle school teacher's perceptions of administrator support, teacher retention, and teacher attrition. During the interview, please do not mention any names that are not a part of this study. Please feel free to share your thoughts, views, and experiences regarding this topic."

4. Share with participants that they have the right to opt out or skip a question at any time in the study without penalty.

5. Share with participants that each individual response is respected.

Appendix B: Demographics Interview Questions (Part 1)

The following questions will be presented on SKYPE:

1. **Age**.
   What is your age?
   A. 18-24
   B. 25-34
   C. 35-44
   D. 45-54
   E. Over 55
2. **Gender.**
What is your gender?
   a. male
   b. female
   c. other
   d. Prefer not to say
3. **Ethnic Origin**.
   What is your ethnicity?
   A. White
   B. Hispanic or Latino
   C. Native American or Indian American
   D. Asian/Pacific Islander
   E. African American
4. **Education**.
   What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
   A. Associate Degree
   B. Bachelor's Degree
   C. Master's Degree
   D. Professional Degree
   E. Doctoral Degree
5. **Education Career.**
   Are you a certified teacher?
   A. yes
   B. no
   C. I have a Provisional which allows me three years to obtain my certification
6. What grades do you teach?
   A. 6th
   B. 7th
   C. 8th
7. What subject do you teach?
   A. Social Studies
   B. Science
   C. English/Language Arts
   D. Math

    E. Other (Please specify other)
8. How many years have you taught throughout your career?
    A. less than 1 year
    B. 1 -5 years
    C. 5-10 years
    D. 10-15 years
    E. 15 + years

Appendix C: Interview Questions (Part 2)

The following questions will be presented on SKYPE or Zoom:
1. What would be reasons why you would leave a school?
2. What would be reasons why you stay at a school?
3. What experiences have you had that supports your previous answer?
4. What role do you think veteran teachers have in supporting new teachers?
5. What are your expectations of the administrators at your school?
6. What does administrator support look like to you?
7. What are the most important types of administrator support do you feel teachers need? Why?
8. What types of support does your administrator provide for teachers? What problem areas can you identify that your administrators at your school can assist you with?
9. What do you believe are the most important factors in retaining teachers at your school?
10. What area of the ecological systems theory do you think your school is influenced by the most? (microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, or exosystem, chronosystem) Why?
11. What challenges do you face daily with student behavior?
12. How does your school administrators recognize and celebrate improved teacher performance related to your school's vision and goals?
13. How does your administrators engage in professional learning that is differentiated to meet your needs?

Appendix D: Description of Codes and Themes

Research Questions	Code	Themes
How do middle school teachers describe administrator support?	**Primary Code:** Description of Administrator Support **Secondary Codes**: • Professional development (7) • Provide collaboration time with colleagues (5) • Provide meaningful feedback (7) • Observations (8) • Instructional support (8) • Provide resources (4)	Instructional Support
	• Support with student behavior (7) • Support with (6) • Create a safe school environment (5) • Creating an environment where teachers/staff feel valued (4) • Strong system, procedures, and policies in place	School culture and climate
	• Showing empathy/ Show that they care (5) • Being nice, respectful (4) Show appreciation/acknowledgement (6)	Emotional support
What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers leave their positions?	**Primary Codes:** Reasons for Leaving **Secondary Codes:** • Lack of admin support (10) • Lack of instructional support (8) • Lack of professionalism from administrator (5) • Micromanagement (3) • Work Overload (2) • Poor Salary (3)	Lack of Administrator Support
	• Unfair treatment, disrespect (7) • Unethical practices (3) • Not having a teacher voice (5) • Lack of support with challenging parents (5) • Student Behavior (9) • Not creating a welcoming school environment (4)	School climate
What are reasons middle school teachers think teachers stay in their positions?	**Primary Code:** Reason for Staying • Admin support (i.e., showing empathy, celebrating teachers, incentives, showing respect) (10) • Having teacher voice (i.e., support with making decisions with school operations and curriculum) (4) • Instructional Support (i.e., informal, formal observations, feedback) (8) • Resources provided (i.e., materials for the classroom) (6) • On-going Professional Development (7) • Collaboration (6)	Administrator support
	• Positive Climate & Culture (7) • Feeling valued (5) • Being acknowledge/celebrated (6) • Treated fairly (7) • Smaller class sizes (2)	School culture and climate
	Primary Code: Love of Job **Secondary Codes** • "Cool Co-workers" (4) • Love the students (3) • Love the teachers/staff (3) • Love the community (4) • Love what I teach (5) Enjoy being at work (4)	Love of the Job

Appendix E: Journal Summary from Interviews

At the start of my journal, I wrote down my perspective of administrator support and teacher retention. My perspective was that teachers were getting some type of support from their administrators, but the lingering question that I had was, was it enough and what types of support was needed to retain teachers. This reflexive statement allowed me to come back later to compare my thoughts after the research results.

I recorded in my journal the process of obtaining permission to do the research in my school district, the alternative route I had to take, the emotions I went through during that process, notes on contacting participants, during and after the interviews. During the time of contacting the participants, I felt down because I had been trying to obtain permission from my school district to do my research for a little over a month. The district and Walden's IRB had some disagreements with the language on the school district Memorandum of Agreement. The IRB suggested that I obtained my participants through social media, and I agreed. I was hesitant doing so, because I had to use this alternative route and did not know how long it would take for people to respond to my email or if anyone would respond. Nevertheless, people did respond to my emails and agreed to participate in m y study.

Once I got to the interview process, I jotted down notes during the interviews. I took notes on the background settings, moods, and tones of the participants. The purpose was to understand if their settings or the types of questions altered their moods and tones. The literature review stated that an individual is influenced by different types of environments. I noted that some participants were in their home in a comfortable spot or

in their home offices that had inspirational messages in frames, and one participant had a dog in their lap during the interview. I jotted this down because participants provided a sense of peace and comfort in their body language which made me feel comfortable conducting the interview.

I also noted long pauses, agitation, and change of tone during the interviews. I thought the pauses were due to participants thinking about the questions asked in which was part of the pause, but the other part of the long pause was that participants were trying to remember everything that I asked within the question. As I reflected on my notes, I realized that two of the participants asked me to repeat one of the questions (which was a two-part question) after their long pause because they did not gather everything that I said because they said I was talking to fast. Moving forward, I ensured that if there were two parts to a question, that I broke the question up into two parts as opposed to asking the two-part question all at once. I did not have any issues moving forward. Next, I captured notes about a participant being agitated when discussing the lack of administrator support. Their voice became loud, they sat up straight, and looked in the camera straight at me with hurt in their eyes and shared how they were attacked by a student after they had been asking for support from their administrator. I felt the hurt as well and it broke my heart. I also noted other participants change in tone, fidgety body, and unsettledness. This behavior was because they recounted past experiences that frustrated them.

Capturing these notes and reflecting on them along with my perspective that I jotted down at the start of my journal helped me to realize a couple of things. First,

alternative plans sometimes turn out to be better than the plan you had at first. Secondly, reflecting on my perspective of administrator support and teacher retention of teachers help me to understand that teachers are experiences some traumatic situations in their schools and are not being supportive by their administrators. Therefore, I understand the reasons for teachers leaving their positions. At the end of my notes, I jotted down ideas of professional developments to support administrators that could lead to retaining teachers and professional developments of professional learning communities that include how to build a positive relationship with administrators.