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Middle and High School Administrators' Perceptions of Retention Factors at Title I Campuses

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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MA, University of West Georgia, 2013

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Principal turnover has a negative influence on the stability of a school's culture and climate and on student achievement. Many U.S. principals leave their positions by the end of their 2nd year, and this number is disproportionately higher for low-income school districts. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools across a southeastern U.S. state. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation grounded this study. The research questions were focused on principals' perceptions of motivation and hygiene factors. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 10 purposively selected middle and high school Title I principals who had a minimum of 2 years as principals in their schools. Content analysis using a priori, open, and pattern coding revealed six themes. The findings indicate that opportunities to influence the school environment, a personal connection to work, and a purpose or calling motivated participants. The principals wanted to support students whose backgrounds were similar to their own and to help their staff members grow. Participants perceived demanding work requirements (meeting community needs and keeping good staff), lack of district leaders' engagement and support, and bureaucratic district and state policies as factors that decreased job satisfaction. District and state educational leaders may use the findings of this study to identify opportunities, strategies, and policy improvements to mitigate hygiene factors and increase motivation factors to attract and retain high-quality principals. School leaders may be able to shape local, state, and national policies to increase the academic achievement of students attending Title I schools, thus effecting positive social change for students, urban campuses, and communities.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my family, including my husband, Aaron; two children, Maddy and David; parents; and sister. Your unwavering support and encouragement during this journey provided the push I needed to continue and complete this milestone. Thank you for being my village!

To David and Maddy, thank you for your unwavering patience and love. Each degree involved a time commitment that often infringed upon our family time. However, you allowed me the uninterrupted time to devote to my coursework and writing. My hope is that I have modeled behaviors to show you that hard work, dedication, persistence, and faith can help you accomplish all of your goals and ambitions. I hope you understand and know that every move I make is for you!

To Aaron, thank you for always serving as my rock! I could not have completed this momentous journey without your patience, love, and support. You were always there to fill in the gaps and never complained. I thank God for you!

To my mom, dad, nephew, and sister, thank you for your extreme support and encouragement through this journey. Sheena, thank you for always being my cheerleader! Tell Saint and Kingston that Auntie is back and about to be on full-time auntie duty. Thank you, Daddy, for always instilling in me that education is my passport to success. Mom, thank you for always praying for me, stepping in to keep Maddy when I just needed a weekend to work, and encouraging me when I wanted to give up. I am grateful for your support in helping me reach this goal.

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Thank you to my chair, Dr. Kathryn Swetnam, also known as “Dr. Kate,” for your expertise, constant inspiration, and patience. I thank God for orchestrating this divine relationship. I could not have accomplished this goal without your support and guidance. Also, special acknowledgements and thanks to my second member, Dr. Mary Kropiewnicki, and university research reviewer, Dr. Christina Dawson, for your insight, feedback, and recommendations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

All stakeholders in a school district have a stake in retaining effective school administrators. Researchers found that a school's likelihood of success decreases when a principal leaves (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Goldring & Taie, 2018; Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Levin et al., 2020). Principal turnover affects teacher retention rates, the stability of the school's culture and climate, and student academic achievement (Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Walsh & Dotter, 2019). This study focused on the turnover rates of middle and high school principals at Title I campuses in a southeastern U.S state. According to the household income level, a school is considered a Title I school if at least 40% of the students are from low-income homes (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Administrator turnover is higher in Title I schools (Babo & Postma, 2017). Many possible factors contribute to principals leaving their schools, including the lack of principal preparation programs, professional development, working environment, and principal support (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Walsh & Dotter, 2019). I designed this study to determine what factors influence an administrator's decision to remain in the school leadership role.

Retaining an effective administrator at a Title I school benefits teachers and students. Babo and Postma (2017) found that 1 in 5 principals leave their school after only 1 year, and this ratio is greater for principals at high-needs schools. Understanding the influences that affect an administrator's decision to remain at a Title I school can help district leaders increase retention rates for administrators and teachers and create longevity in carrying out the district's mission and vision (Walsh & Dotter, 2019).

In this qualitative study, I focused on administrators' perceptions that influence turnover at Title I campuses in a southeastern state. I interviewed administrators at Title I schools to determine their perceptions of remaining at a Title I campus. This study contributes to the body of knowledge needed to address the gap in research about practice by exploring the perceptions of factors influencing the turnover of principals at Title I schools (see Babo & Postma, 2017; Walsh & Dotter, 2019). Retaining administrators at Title I schools would potentially lead to positive social change in districts throughout the state.

The results from this study may inform district and state administrators of motivational factors that support principal retention at a Title I campus and provide information concerning professional practice. The study may also inform future research focused on supporting administrators at Title I schools. Therefore, this study needed to be conducted to further contribute to the literature regarding principal retention and provide districts and the target state with additional insight on motivational and hygiene factors that may reduce turnover in Title I schools. Motivation and hygiene factors are elements of Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation, which was this study's conceptual framework. In this chapter, I provide background information on attrition of principals at Title I schools, the problem and purpose of this study, the research questions (RQs), and an overview of the conceptual framework. I explain the nature of the study, provide definitions that are important to the study, and present an overview of the literature that is thoroughly reviewed in Chapter 2.

Background

In 2020, the state department of education personnel created a vision for the target state's schools to ensure that all students had equitable access to effective educational leaders in every school. However, this vision became difficult to attain when attrition rates of principals exceeded 10%. The problem was exacerbated because the attrition rates of leaders of high-poverty schools were higher than those of low-poverty schools (see Table 1).

Table 1

Five-Year Attrition Rates of School Leaders in the Target State

Year	Leader attrition rate (%)	
	Low-poverty schools	High-poverty schools
2015-2016	9	14
2016-2017	9	13
2017-2018	13	22
2018-2019	18	22
2019-2020	–	–

Note. At the time the study was conducted, no data were available for the 2019-2020 school year.

Individual district attrition rates are also higher for low-poverty schools. This study focused on urban school districts in the southeastern state that are known for their fast growth; the district retention rates are lower than the rates in neighboring, more rural districts. At the time of the study, the state was home to over 1.6 million students in over 2,300 schools, with a poverty rate of over 50% for the state. The retention of principals is

mission critical to achieving the target state's goal to provide skilled administrators for each campus, as outlined on the state department of education website.

In response to the state's call to provide and maintain skilled administrators, one local area superintendent of an urban school district commented that the issue of retaining principals in Title I schools is an ongoing concern for the district, particularly for campuses located in the southern part of the district, which comprises high-poverty schools. The area superintendent noted that the retention rate of principals for this zone was below 70% for the 2020-2021 school year. Less than 40% of the principals had been in their school for 3 or more years. In preparation for the upcoming school year, the area superintendent expressed concerns about the district's strategy to retain current principals and fill staff principal vacancies with quality leaders. The area superintendent added that because of leadership retention issues, existing principals were moved to different schools, and efforts were underway to recruit principals from neighboring school districts. The area superintendent further stated that these principal transitions might negatively affect the school climate, student achievement, and teacher retention in the district. Therefore, discovering why the southeastern state's middle and high school principals decide to stay in their Title I schools may assist urban school district and state leaders with retaining top talent to ensure actualization of the state's goal of ensuring effective leaders in all classrooms.

Problem Statement

High turnover rates of principals in high-needs schools are a challenge for many school districts across the United States. Researchers have noted that principal retention

has been an issue for schools and districts since 2000 (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Tran (2017) found that approximately 50% of principals left their schools by the end of their 2nd year of administrative duty. This issue is exacerbated in schools with high poverty and low achievement (Wilkerson & Wilson, 2017). Steinberg and Yang (2019) reported that principal turnover is disproportionately seen in school districts that serve low-income students, which in turn results in negative consequences for student performance. Specifically, the problem of this study was the high turnover rate of Title I middle and high school principals in a southeastern state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. I invited principals from Title I schools to be participants in this study. I interviewed 10 participants to obtain data to understand why middle and high school principals decide to remain at Title I schools in the southeastern U.S. state. Researchers have found low retention rates for principals in high-needs schools (Bartanen et al., 2019; Dhuey & Smith, 2018). My goal in undertaking this study was to inform superintendents, principal supervisors, and future principals of Title I schools of factors that influence middle and high school principals to remain in Title I schools. This study may yield insight that enables school districts and state education departments to establish practices and professional development to support principals in Title I schools and help increase student academic achievement.

Research Questions

To determine the perceptions of middle and high school principals' decision to remain at a Title I school, I developed the following RQs:

RQ1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

RQ2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Herzberg's paradigm known as the two-factor theory of motivation. Herzberg's (1974) theory postulates that certain factors affect job satisfaction in the workplace, which are called motivation and hygiene factors. Managers use motivation factors to encourage employees to gain satisfaction to increase job performance (Alenezi, 2020; Sledge et al., 2008). Hygiene factors, conversely, may decrease job satisfaction if not met and serve as a demotivator.

Motivating factors are intrinsic in nature and create job satisfaction; motivation factors are separate and distinct from the hygiene factors that lead to job dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction produces benefits for the individual and the employee (Alenezi, 2020; Evans & Olumide-Aluko, 2010). Herzberg (1976) identified five motivating factors in the two-factor paradigm as advancement, responsibility, achievement, recognition, and the work itself. Hygiene factors are extrinsic factors that are controlled by the organization rather than the individual. Working conditions, salary, or relationship with supervisors are characteristic of hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1974). Yur (2018) identified motivation

and hygiene factors that influence public managers' job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. Applied to this study of educational administrators, the motivation factors are

- opportunities for advancement
- recognition
- achievement
- responsibility
- the work itself
- creative and challenging work
- interest in the work

The hygiene factors are

- district and state educational policy
- salary
- supervisor relationship
- work–life balance
- working conditions
- job status
- job security
- interpersonal relationships with peers

Researchers have found that motivational factors play a role in an individual's decision to remain in their current position or to leave (Alenezi, 2020; Bartanen et al., 2019). Thus, when principals experience positive motivational factors, they may be more likely to remain at their Title I campus. By researching motivation and hygiene factors, I

sought to clarify the influences on principals' decisions to remain at or leave a Title I school. I used Herzberg's (1974, 1976) theory to construct the RQs for the study. I asked middle and high school principals to share their perceptions regarding motivation factors that encourage them to stay at their Title I school and hygiene factors that would decrease their satisfaction as a Title I principal. The conceptual framework also provided a lens for analyzing the data; I used a priori codes from Herzberg's paradigm for the first coding of the data. Herzberg's theory was foundational to this study to investigate the perceptions of factors influencing the turnover of Title I middle and high school principals in a southeastern U.S. state. I present a thorough explanation of this conceptual framework in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative design encompasses data collection, management, and analysis that is aligned with the researcher's goals and objectives and the RQs of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For this study, I chose a basic qualitative research design to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that qualitative research provides data concerning how people perceive and experience the world and make meaning of their experience. A basic qualitative study focuses on understanding an experience that is founded on concepts, models, or theories in education. However, this type of study is not underpinned by a specific set of philosophical assumptions based on one of the known qualitative methodologies (Caelli et al., 2003). A basic qualitative study was an appropriate approach for this study because

the purpose of study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state.

I used my professional network and public contact information available on district websites to recruit middle and highs school administrators from different public school districts in a large urban area in the target state. I purposely selected 51 middle school and high school principals of Title I schools, of whom 10 volunteered to be part of this study. I conducted semistructured interviews and asked open-ended questions using probes. The interviews lasted 45–60 min. The questions for the interview were based on the motivation factors that may encourage principals to remain at their Title I campus and the hygiene factors that may decrease job satisfaction. To conduct the interviews, I created an interview protocol with questions based on Herzberg's two-factor theory, peer-reviewed literature, and other similar studies. I conducted these interviews using a videoconferencing program. I conducted all interviews, which I also recorded and transcribed.

I protected the confidentiality of the participants by replacing their names with alphanumeric symbols. I handled all interview data, interview recordings, and documents in accordance with Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. Each interview was recorded so that I could transcribe the interview for data analysis. As part of the content analysis protocol, I performed a priori, open, and pattern coding of the interview data (see Bengtsson, 2016). By developing these codes, I was able to identify categories from the data and observe emerging themes that answered the RQs of this study. To increase the trustworthiness of this study, I member checked the findings with

all participants and used a peer debriefer. The final steps of the analysis process were to interpret the findings from the study in the context of the conceptual framework and other peer-reviewed literature. In Chapter 3, I further explain the nature and methodology of this study.

Definitions

Principal retention: A phenomenon that occurs when a principal remains at the school in their role as principal (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018).

Principal turnover: A phenomenon that occurs when one principal exits a school and is replaced by another principal (Cullen & Mazzeo, 2008).

Title I school: A school in which at least 40% of the students come from families identified as low income according to the household income level per U.S. federal educational regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Assumptions

Assumptions are asserted convictions that have yet to be found true (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This study was based on three assumptions. First, I assumed that the middle and high school principals would be willing to complete the interviews and provide truthful and transparent responses to the interview responses. A risk was that some principals in the study might embellish or answer questions with responses they thought were expected of them rather than with total honesty. I assumed that participants would answer questions truthfully and not out of fear that responses might be shared with their supervisor. To promote truthful responses, I ensured that participants understood that their identities would remain confidential throughout the research process. Additionally,

as the observer, I promoted truthful answers by maintaining confidentiality of the participants.

The second assumption was that the purposely chosen middle and high school principals at Title I schools would have the necessary experience and expertise to answer the RQs. All participants were required to have a minimum of 2 years of experience as an administrator of a Title I school. To ensure that the selected principals could adequately respond to the interview questions, I required that they have previous experience as a principal and that they had made the decision to remain at a Title I school. Finally, participation in this study was voluntary. I did not provide compensation to encourage study participation. Thus, the third assumption was that all participants had an interest in the study, no conflict of interest, and no perception of personal or professional gain by participating.

Scope and Delimitations

I undertook this qualitative research study to investigate the perceptions of principals regarding motivation and hygiene factors that influenced their decision to remain at a Title I school. Burkholder et al. (2020) described the scope of a study as parameters that determine a study. Therefore, the scope of this study included participants from middle and high school Title I campuses. These administrators were selected based on the criteria of having worked in a Title I school for a minimum of 2 years. Additionally, the participants of this study included only principals from the targeted southeastern state.

Specifying delimitations helps to narrow a study by providing details of what will not be included in the study relative to the participants, time, or location (Burkholder et al., 2020). This study was delimited to the perceptions of middle and high school principals of Title I schools. The study did not include elementary school principals, other administrators within the school, or principals of a non-Title I school. I made the decision to limit the scope to principals based on the exploratory nature of the RQs and the goal to understand principals' perceptions of factors influencing principal turnover at Title I schools. Another delimitation of this study was using only participants with the criteria of having worked in a Title I school for a minimum of 2 years. This study only included principals who had a minimum of 2 years of experience as the principal of a Title I school, which meant that participants had decided to remain at a Title I school for more than 1 year. Finally, I did not include middle and high school principals beyond the selected southeastern state. Transferability of the findings of this study may be limited because of the purposely selected middle and high school principals of Title I schools and the location of this study to one southeastern U.S. state.

Limitations

All methodological approaches have limitations that are beyond a researcher's control. Limitations in a study are the result of possible shortcomings or weaknesses of the study; therefore, stating the limitations allows a reader to make meaning of the findings (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). A basic qualitative approach has limitations related to (a) sample size, (b) replication of qualitative studies, and (c) researcher bias.

The first limitation of this study is the small sample size of 10 middle and high school principals of Title I schools. Ellis and Levy (2009) stated that a small sample size reduces the transferability of the study to different contexts. Therefore, the small sample size may constitute a limitation of this study. However, a detailed description of the study may provide information that is sufficient for a reader to transfer the findings of this study to another context.

A second limitation of a qualitative study design is that findings do not lend themselves well to replicability as with quantitative studies (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The ability to apply the findings of a study to a broader context is known as transferability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The findings from this study may only be considered in the context in which I conducted the study.

A third limitation of qualitative research includes the role a researcher plays in the study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined positionality as the researcher's role in relation to the study. As a former principal colleague of some of the participants, I was concerned that some participating principals might embellish or answer questions with answers they believed I wanted to hear rather than truthful answers. Therefore, I needed to be aware of any personal perceptions, experiences, and biases. During the study, I maintained a reflexive journal in which I documented the process for the study, addressed any questions or uncertainties that arose, and reflected on the decisions made during the study (see Meyer & Willis, 2019). I was conscious to position myself as a nonbiased researcher to obtain authentic results to answer the RQs. By recognizing and discussing the

limitations of this basic qualitative study, I hope to make the findings of this study more credible for readers.

Significance

This study addressed the gap in practice in the research literature regarding motivation and hygiene factors that may affect principal turnover at Title I middle schools and high schools. High rates of principal turnover result in the learning environment becoming inconsistent and volatile (Babo & Postma, 2017), which could ultimately influence school climate, culture, and student achievement. Therefore, district and state leaders need to understand why middle school and high school principals choose to remain at Title I schools. Along with academic benefits, retention of principals saves districts and states time and money by reducing the level of resources allocated to recruit and rehire new principals (Alenezi, 2020).

Positive social change may result at the district and state level by providing a guide for superintendents and administrators to adequately support and retain middle and high school principals in Title I schools. Likewise, this study also may inform local and national educational policy efforts to address crucial motivation and hygiene factors that support the retention of middle and high school principals at Title I schools. Educational leaders and policy makers may use the findings to begin a larger conversation regarding factors that may result in principal retention and reduce the turnover of principals in Title I middle and high schools. This conversation may lead to positive social change by improving school, district, and state conditions that enhance principals' experiences as leaders of Title I schools.

Summary

Retaining principals at Title I schools is necessary to create a school climate and culture that support student growth and achievement. In this basic qualitative study, I focused on principals' perceptions of motivation and hygiene factors that influence administrator turnover at Title I schools. Herzberg's two-factor theory served as the conceptual framework to ground the study. Specifically, this study focused on the perceptions of 10 middle and high school principals at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. Substantial research exists on the retention of teachers at Title I and high-needs schools (Bartanen et al., 2019; Burkhauser, 2017; Collie et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2020; Kraft et al., 2016); however, research is limited on the retention of principals at Title I or high-needs schools. Therefore, this research is potentially significant because it may clarify the motivation and hygiene factors that influence turnover at Title I schools and provide guidance to district and state educational policy makers on how best to retain principals at Title I schools. In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the problem, purpose, RQs, conceptual framework, and scope of the study. In Chapter 2, I further explain the conceptual framework of this study and present a review of the peer-reviewed literature on principal retention and the effects of principal turnover.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem discussed in this study is the high turnover rate of middle and high school principals of Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. A gap in practice in the research literature exists regarding factors that influence middle and high school administrator turnover at Title I schools (Babo & Postma, 2017; Walsh & Dotter, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. The findings of this study may assist principal supervisors with identifying additional measures to provide support to principals. Findings could inform district and state leaders and educational policy makers of additional opportunities to retain middle and high school principals in Title I schools.

High attrition rates among principals are not only a concern for this southeastern U.S. state, but also a national issue. Approximately 50% of new principals will leave their position within the first 3 years of leadership (School Leaders Network, 2014). Principal turnover is even higher for Title I schools (Babo & Postma, 2017). The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) highlighted the important role school principals play in supporting schools with meeting national standards. More specifically, ESSA (2015) federal policy includes direct actions that outline the principal's role in school improvement and how districts may use federal funding to invest in the development of school leaders to overcome barriers to drive school improvement. Failure to maintain principals in their administrative roles challenges state and local educational agencies to realize the federal policy's educational goals (Young et al., 2017). Therefore, the findings

of this study may lead to positive social change by informing local education policy efforts to address factors that influence principals to remain in Title I middle and high schools.

In the literature review, I provide an historical overview of school leaders as well as discuss the reasons why principals opt to leave or remain at their job and the effects of principal turnover. Chapter 2 also includes information concerning the search terms and strategies used to pinpoint current research. I also provide a thorough explanation of the conceptual framework, Herzberg's (1976) two-factor theory. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the Walden University Library to search for peer-reviewed literature for this study. The library provided me with access to electronic books, journals, and databases to find research literature concerning administrator turnover at Title I schools. My searches primarily included the databases SAGE Knowledge, ProQuest Central, ERIC, PsycINFO, Educational Source, EBSCO, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. I also searched local and state education agency websites and the website of the National Center of Education Statistics. I also linked my Walden University Library account to Google Scholar to obtain current peer-reviewed articles. The Library also provides a document delivery service for articles not available in its holdings; using the service, I was able to find relevant literature to supplement these sources.

I used an iterative search process to obtain seminal and current resources for this chapter. I used the following keywords and phrases as search terms: *administrator* and/or

principal retention, *administrator's perceptions*, *principal satisfaction*, *principal attrition*, *Herzberg's two-factor theory*, *school principal* and *high-needs schools*, *Title I school*, *motivational factors,* and *hygiene factors*. To obtain the most relevant information, I used Boolean operators such as *and*, *or*, parentheses, and *not* to combine search terms in various ways. I used factors of principal retention or principal attrition in some searches. For example, I searched *factors of principal retention not assistant principal*. I also used iterations of *influences of principal/administrator retention*. However, when I conducted the initial research and used the search terms of *principal*/*administrator retention* and *high-needs schools* together, I found no current relevant literature on the topic. This lack of peer-reviewed articles substantiated a gap in the literature concerning factors that influence administrator turnover in Title I schools. In my searches, I targeted peer-reviewed journal articles from 2017 to 2021, state educational department websites, and credible websites pertaining to public education that addressed the topic of this study.

The research results from combining the terms *principal retention* and *high-needs schools* were limited. As a result, I continued to conduct separate searches to saturate the literature for this study, focusing on factors that influence middle and high school principals at high-needs schools. Because of the nature of this topic, I included research and journal articles from educational and leadership journals in the literature review. To reach saturation, I continued to search for information about the topic, read the literature, and analyze the information to determine findings and implications of this study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Herzberg's two-factor theory. In studying employees' perceptions concerning work, Herzberg et al. (1959) sought to (a) identify and categorize the motivating factors of an employee, (b) determine specific motivators toward a person's job, and (c) consider any consequences these factors would have on the employee and their job performance. Herzberg et al. identified key factors that either motivate or demotivate employees to perform on the job.

Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, which addresses the factors that increase job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, is widely known within the seminal literature on the topic of motivation. Although it was one of the earliest motivational theories, Herzberg's two-factor theory emanated from previous studies. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs served as an anchor for Herzberg's study. Maslow suggested that motivation was goal driven and could be met when five physiological drivers of motivation occurred: physiological needs, security needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Maslow posited that these five basic requirements, along with a desire to achieve, drive motivation in a person. Herzberg (1966) further explored Maslow's hierarchy of needs and extended the construct of motivation in the business world by conducting semistructured interviews with accountants and engineers. Maslow identified two separate concepts of employee needs. The essential features of Herzberg's (1966) theory suggest that job factors are divided into two distinct categories: factors that contribute to job satisfaction and factors that may contribute to job dissatisfaction. However, Herzberg (1966) postulated that job

satisfaction and job dissatisfaction could not be viewed as a single continuum where one decreases as the other increases.

Along with Maslow (1943), McGregor (1960) identified two types of employees: Theory X and Theory Y. McGregor claimed that Theory X employees were unenterprising people who required the motivation of management to succeed at work. This motivational theory paralleled the carrot-and-stick theory that asserted that the manager was responsible for ensuring employees' physiological and safety needs were met, which in turn motivated the employee to perform (McGregor, 1960). Without intervention from the manager, employees would be unresponsive to the organizational needs. Therefore, employees would require managers to provide incentives to motivate them to do their jobs.

Herzberg et al. (1959) identified hygiene factors that may influence job dissatisfaction but alone do not encourage job satisfaction. These hygiene factors, also called job dissatisfiers, are extrinsic factors within the job environment that are often decided by upper management beyond the control of the employee (Herzberg, 1966). Hygiene factors include working conditions, interpersonal relationships, personal life, pay, administration, job security, and supervision (Herzberg, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959).

One critic of Herzberg's work posited that Herzberg's paradigm had only been applied in limited settings within certain job fields and only measured one aspect of employee attitudes (Ewen, 1964). However, researchers began to apply Herzberg's theory in the educational setting during the 1980s to determine faculty job satisfaction

(Austin & Gamson, 1983). Olsen et al. (1995) found a direct link between a faculty member's job satisfaction, their control over certain variables of work, and their academic satisfaction. Other studies were conducted within educational settings that further supported Herzberg's theory, indicating the applicability of the paradigm to contexts outside of the industrial and business settings (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Volkwein & Zhou, 2003).

Motivational theory has transcended the boundaries of social psychology to the educational arena (Gardner, 1977). In studies that applied Herzberg's theory in educational research, according to Peters-Hawkins et al. (2018), low salaries, stress factors, the complex and ever-changing role of the principal, long hours, and lack of district support decreased interest in the principal position. Therefore, hygiene factors played an important role in the attraction and retention of principals. Hygiene factors are unique in that if met, they may decrease job dissatisfaction; however, hygiene factors alone do not increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1974). In other words, hygiene factors must first be met to eliminate any job dissatisfaction. Once hygiene factors are met, then motivation factors are considered to increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1974).

Factors that contribute to job satisfaction are categorized as intrinsic motivators in nature and produced as a result of an individual's higher need (Herzberg, 1974). Herzberg et al. (1959) found these motivational factors to include a sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility, the work itself, advancement, and opportunities for professional and personal growth. Giving more attention to intrinsic factors will increase satisfaction but may not affect job dissatisfaction (Gardner, 1977). Increasing

motivational factors may serve to improve overall organizational efficiency by improving productivity, attendance, and job performance (Gardner, 1977). Fernet (2011) found that if a principal willingly engaged in their work because it was meaningful, they were more productive and would attain their goals, regardless of the external work environment factors. Therefore, school districts and states must have a strategy to identify and continually address hygiene factors that may increase job dissatisfaction as well as those motivational factors that increase satisfaction for principals.

Given the important role principals play in school improvement, policy makers and administrators need to understand factors that influence principals to remain in their role as a principal of a Title I school. A gap exists in the peer-reviewed literature regarding principals' motivation to remain in their administrative position (Fernet, 2011). Motivation is both an internal and external construct that encourages behavioral change (Arsanti et al., 2021). The two-factor theory of motivation was beneficial to this study by grounding the research to determine motivational and hygiene factors that influence principal retention or turnover in Title I schools. These factors may be used to increase principal supervisors' competency to ensure the adequacy of hygiene factors to decrease job dissatisfaction. Research based on this theory also may influence positive social change by equipping district leaders and educational policy makers with implications concerning how they may increase support for principals to increase retention in Title I schools.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The principal plays a pivotal role in the leadership and management of the school. Approximately 20% of U.S. principals leave their school responsibilities each year (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Principal turnover affects all aspects of the school, including teacher retention, the overall culture and climate of the school, and student academic achievement. Each time a principal resigns school district administrators must recruit, staff, and train the new principal, which may be difficult because of principal shortages (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). The retention of principals, particularly in urban districts, should be a top priority of the state. To increase principal retention and lessen turnover in school districts, policy makers and administrators need to understand how the role of principal has changed throughout the years, possible outcomes of principal turnover, and the motivational and hygiene factors that influence turnover.

The Role of the Principal

The role of principal is complex, multifaceted, and ever changing. Principals are required to spread their time across multiple responsibilities while meeting the needs of various stakeholders (Sebastian et al., 2018). Abowitz (2019) defined the principal position based on the roles as a democratic leader and administrator of the school. In this context, a school principal is characterized by the roles, challenges, and the expected solutions that should be offered to solve problems. As an administrator and manager of a school, the principal acts as the liaison between the school and the central office (Abowitz, 2019). A principal's primary role is to ensure educational policies are implemented to meet the school's needs, represent the school at the district office, and

translate state and district mandates to lead school improvement. This role becomes even more daunting in an urban turnaround school (Day et al., 2016; Reitzug & Hewitt, 2017) where principals are responsible for significantly improving school outcomes in a short amount of time.

Researchers' findings indicated that the role of the principal has changed drastically since 2000 (Sebastian et al., 2018). According to Murray (2020), the challenges encountered by principals as administrators and managers arise from the diverse roles that define a principal. Hallinger (1992) noted that in the 1960s and 1970s the principal's role was seen primarily as a manager of the school. In the 1980s, the role of the principal further evolved to become an instructional leader and then as a transformational leader in the 1990s (Hallinger, 1992).

The role of principal becomes even more complex if they are a leader of a traditionally low-performing school with additional requirements for school improvement (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Richardson et al., 2016). Compounded with the complexities of administrative roles, new principals also need to make meaning of their new role and lead their school to success. Burkhauser et al. (2012) posited that a new principal's capacity to successfully navigate this role influences their decision to return beyond the 1st year of leadership. Researchers have found that over 20% of new principals will leave the role within 2 years (Burkhauser et al., 2012), and 50% leave the profession within the 3rd year (Bartanen et al., 2019). The modern role of a school principal is burdensome because principals are expected to perform optimally and deliver results on state standardized assessments. Therefore, principals need to understand the

varying degrees of their role, and district and state leaders need to provide the necessary support and professional learning to help principals navigate through the various obligations of the role and avoid principal turnover.

Principal Turnover

Turnover is an inevitable factor in every organization because resignation and change are determined, in some instances, by factors beyond an organization's control. Bartanen et al. (2019) defined turnover as a loss of talent in an organization through natural causes, location transfers, terminations, resignation, retirement, and layoffs. From a business perspective, organizations should calculate the employee turnover rate to predict the influence of turnover on the business (Lee, 2018). Business leaders analyze the turnover rate to identify the rationale of why people leave their employment to determine if the reason was preventable or beyond the control of the organization.

In the context of education, especially as related to principal movement, turnover occurs when a principal transfers to a new location, resigns, succumbs to natural causes such as illness or death, becomes terminated, or leaves for a transfer to another school or position. Similar to employees in other fields, a principal's contract can be terminated based on violations of its terms, such as unethical behaviors, among other factors (Tran, 2017). Although district and state leaders cannot predict when and why turnover may happen, because of reasons beyond their control, they must prepare and plan for change.

Principal turnover is often unpredictable and creates barriers for schools to carry out the strategic initiatives and sustain school efforts. Steinberg and Yang (2019) defined principal turnover as the movement of principals from one post to the other within the

education system or to other fields. Principal turnover is further defined as the movement of a principal entirely out of the field of education by way of resigning or retiring (Steinberg & Yang, 2019). The researchers' findings further revealed that a mobile principal is more likely to either move to another school in the same district or relocate to another state to assume the role of a principal in another school. Based on the Steinberg and Yang study, the turnover of principals in the education sector is evidently either for promotion or to exit the education sector by way of retirement or to venture into other organizations. Steinberg and Yang posited that although principal turnover is ubiquitous, the pattern discerned in their study was not predictable, and the findings of the study might not be transferable to other states.

School administrators are responsible for ensuring academic environments promote student success. Principal leadership is vital to the development of strategic priorities for school improvement. Stable school leadership in a school is important because school improvement is laborious and requires an extensive time commitment (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Employee turnover is inevitable and affects an organization either positively or negatively (Plecki et al., 2017). Principal upward mobility in a school may affect the school either negatively or positively. In most instances, upward mobility within an organization is a promotion, even though the movement leaves the previous post held by an individual vacant and necessitates replacement with a competent employee. Transfers may negatively influence an organization, albeit adding value to the location where the employee has been transferred. However, turnover motivated by

resignation for other job opportunities outside an organization only has a negative influence on the organization.

There are two theoretical perspectives regarding the influence employee turnover has on an organization. In some cases, principal turnover may provide advantageous outcomes. Conversely, principals leaving school administrative roles may create disruptive circumstances that precipitate adverse consequences. I discuss each of these viewpoints in the following sections.

Negative Outcomes of Principal Turnover

Administrative turnover may create disruptions and negative outcomes for organizations and educational campuses. Principals who leave the school leadership role can precipitate undesirable determinants on climate and culture that can affect the overall performance of the organization. Teachers and classroom instruction also suffer from the lack of administrative leadership with turnover. Student academic achievement may decrease when principals leave a school, despite limited direct influence on student learning.

Negative Effect of Principal Turnover on Campus Learning Environment

Principal turnover also may influence the school's ability to sustain change and maintain a strategic focus on the predecessor's vision (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2014), which can affect the campus learning environment. In essence, principals influence a particular school's organizational and operational culture by establishing schedules, setting rules and regulations, collaborating with the community, and facilitating work effectiveness among teachers. In turn, the practices influence student performance and

achievement and hence, school stability. Understanding school needs and building relationships with teachers and the community are the fundamental requirements for school stability (Bartanen et al., 2019). However, new principals may take considerable time to acquire knowledge and build such relationships.

In addition to the integral role principals play in setting the vision and mission of the school's learning environment, principals play a key role in teachers' perceptions of the learning environment. Using the North Carolina Teacher Working Condition Survey, Burkhauser (2017) investigated the relationship between teacher perceptions of four learning environment domains and the principal. The four learning environment domains were (a) teacher time use, (b) physical environment, (c) teacher empowerment/school leadership, and (d) professional development. Based on Burkhauser's findings, the principal had a statistically significant influence on all four learning environment domains. For example, increasing principal quality or principal tenure by 1 standard deviation significantly influenced a teacher's perception of the four learning environment domains.

Collie et al. (2018) asserted that principals have a noteworthy influence on the learning environment. The researchers of the quantitative study found that principals had a direct influence on ensuring a positive learning environment for all teachers through the construct of perceived autonomy support. Teachers perceived the learning environment to be more positive when the principal encouraged a greater environment of perceived autonomy supports. The converse of this finding held true as well, according to Collie et al. Teachers who reported working under a principal who was controlling and

micromanaged daily activities reported lower well-being and were more prone to burnout. Therefore, the role of principal significantly influences the school learning environment.

Bartanen et al. (2019) identified another unintended consequence of principal turnover affecting the learning environment of a school campus was the potential of replacing a quality principal with a less-experienced principal. The length of time an effective principal serves in an administrative leadership role in a school influences the overall learning environment of the school. When an administrator is replaced by a principal of lesser ability, a negative effect may occur on the campus learning environment. School principals are integral in developing and maintaining sustainable educational initiatives, including collaboration between teachers and the community to ensure a favorable climate for learning. Therefore, principal turnover may lead to negative outcomes for the school learning environment.

Negative Effect of Principal Turnover on Teachers and Classroom Instruction

Teachers are also negatively affected by resignation, retirement, or change of the principal's role (Sutcher et al., 2017). Findings from studies indicated that principals directly influence the performance of teachers through increasing teachers' self-efficacy, student engagement, and teacher retention (Baptiste, 2019; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Brown, 2016; Burkhauser, 2017; Day et al., 2016; Guthery & Bailes, 2022). Thus, when a principal leaves a school due to work pressure, stress, or other extenuating reasons, classroom instruction is negatively affected in various ways.

Principal turnover has negative consequences on teacher retention. Researchers found that principal support is a key factor in whether teachers decided to remain at or leave their school (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Robertson-Kraft and Zhang (2018) found that when principals were engaged in meeting the needs of teachers and leading with high expectations, staff retention rates were higher. In their mixed-methods study, Roberson-Kraft and Zhang found the two most predictive factors of teacher retention were the teacher's perceptions of whether their principal was supportive and recognized effective performance.

Bartanen et al. (2019) examined the casual relationship between principal turnover and student achievement by exploring the differences and similarities between statewide data from Tennessee and Missouri. The findings showed a significant relationship between principal turnover and student academic achievement. Bartanen et al. also found other consequences of principal turnover, such as increased teacher turnover. The researchers further noted that the reason a leader left a principal position influenced potential consequences for the campus. Bartanen et al. found when principals moved to a different school or were promoted to a central office job, the negative effects on student achievement were the most severe. However, when principals relocated to another state or retired from the profession, students and faculty experienced fewer consequences. The researchers recommended future qualitative studies be conducted to examine perspectives of the consequences of principal turnover on student achievement and school climate. Because of the potential negative effects of principal turnover on

teachers and classroom instruction, district and state leaders should address factors of principal retention.

Negative Effect of Principal Turnover on Student Academic Achievement

A growing body of research findings has revealed the influence a principal has on student achievement (Day et al., 2016). In a mixed methods study, Day et al. (2016) found that a principal's responsiveness to recognize and understand the needs of the school staff and students allowed the principal to have a positive influence on student achievement. Although a principal may not provide classroom instruction, administrative turnover has consequences on children's academic learning. Burkhauser et al. (2012) posited that when a principal leaves a school, students are more likely to perform poorly because of the instability created by change and the lack of leadership.

Principal influence is seen indirectly on student achievement through the learning environment created by the principal. Park et al. (2019) found that the level of principal support influenced certain school-level factors that, in turn, influenced student achievement. The school-level factors studied were the use of professional learning communities, the school's collective responsibility for student achievement, and the teachers' expectations of students. The researchers found that student achievement was influenced when teachers had a high level of principal support for professional learning communities, high expectations, and collective responsibility. Park et al. asserted that the principal has an indirect influence on student achievement. However, additional studies should be conducted to determine any direct link to student achievement.

Babo and Postma (2017) studied a sample of 172 elementary schools in New Jersey. Using multiple regression analysis, these researchers found a significant relationship between the length of service of a principal and the students' academic achievement on the New Jersey mathematics and language arts state standardized assessment scores. Babo and Postma observed that the longer an effective principal remained and served at a school, students attained increased academic achievement. The departure of an experienced principal who served for a long time resulted in an overall negative influence on student academic achievement. Babo and Postma suggested that such transitions affected school efficacy because performance in the initial subsequent years of a new administration would decrease before rebounding.

Not only does principal turnover negatively influence student achievement, but also the type of turnover may either increase or decrease the influence on student achievement. Bartanen et al. (2019) found that demotions tended to have a more severe influence on student achievement rather than a principal who received a promotion to the district office. In cases where the principal was demoted, student achievement steadily declined for the first 2 years after the transition. Bartanen et al. also asserted that declines in student achievement were observed leading up to the transition of the principal and continued 2–3 years after the demotion. Therefore, principal turnover may have lasting influences on student achievement well beyond the 1st year of the principal's transition.

Positive Outcomes of Principal Turnover

Principal turnover may not always result in negative outcomes for schools but may be advantageous (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Bartanen et al., 2019; Dalton &

Todor, 1979). In a seminal study, Grusky (1960) asserted that a benefit of employee turnover was the innovation the next person may bring to the organization and position. Bartanen et al. (2019) posited that the benefits of replacing a low-performing principal far outweighed the consequences of keeping an ineffective principal in a school. If the principal turnover resulted in a more experienced and higher quality principal occupying the role, then the replacement effects will be positive. Although research is limited concerning the positive influence of principal turnover, in some cases, the change of administrators may increase teacher retention and student achievement.

Positive Effects of Principal Turnover on Teacher Retention

Less effective principals, as evaluated by teacher ratings, are more likely to leave their schools (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). Principal turnover has the potential of effecting positive change in the school environment when a competent principal replaces a less effective principal. Principals ultimately influence the school's strategic initiatives and priorities by ensuring teachers receive the necessary supports to succeed in the classroom. Principals are responsible for providing teachers with growth opportunities to increase their self-efficacy, retention, and engagement (Tran & Smith, 2020). Instability in the principal's role ultimately may negatively influence the stability of teachers, resulting in increased teacher turnover (Baptiste, 2019).

Among numerous working environments, Kraft et al. (2016) discovered that principal leadership was the strongest predictor of teacher attrition. Furthermore, principals who lack instructional vision and strategies to support teachers may negatively influence the growth experiences and opportunities for teachers. Replacing an ineffective

principal with an effective principal may increase stability within teachers' roles and growth opportunities. Even in situations when student and teacher characteristics such as racial composition, socioeconomic status, and student achievement indicated that turnover was probable, strong principal leadership helped to keep teachers on the job (Kraft et al., 2016). A replacement principal who exhibits strong leadership capabilities may positively affect the professional growth of educators and increase teacher retention.

Positive Effect of Principal Turnover on Student Achievement

School leaders' actions have a significant influence on teacher and student experiences as well as the school's overall performance (Baptiste, 2019). Quality principal leadership not only influences student academic achievement, but also increases student attendance (Bartanen, 2020). In a study using data from Tennessee for the 2007–2017 school years and value-added modeling, Bartanen (2020) found that replacing a non-quality principal with a quality principal decreased the student absenteeism rate by 0.8% on average, resulting in an increase of 1.4 instructional days. Grissom et al. (2021) asserted that replacing a below-average principal with an above-average principal would result in an additional 2.9 months of learning in mathematics and 2.7 months of learning in reading.

Huang et al. (2020) further confirmed the positive outcomes of principal turnover when replacing school administrative leaders with an effective principal. Huang et al. complied data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study principal survey and grouped principals by how they spent their time during the school day in comparison to student achievement. The middle school principals in the study were

divided into two groups and labeled as “balanced and eclectic principals” (Huang et al., 2020, p. 315). Balanced principals were able to differentiate time spent on all leadership tasks while focusing the majority of their time on supporting teacher instruction and setting high expectations for student learning. Eclectic principals predominately concentrated their time on disciplinary and behavioral tasks during the school day. In the Huang et al. study, students in schools led by balanced principals showed greater performance in mathematics than students in schools led by eclectic principals. Although the results were not statistically significant, Huang et al. found that schools led by principals who were able to attend to teacher needs and student outcomes exhibited increased student academic achievement. Not all turnover has a negative influence on student achievement. In some instances, replacing an ineffective principal with an effective principal may improve student academic performance.

In summary, the negative consequences of principal turnover are clear, particularly regarding high-poverty schools. Although turnover is associated with negative outcomes for schools, some researchers have indicated potential positive outcomes of principal turnover. Negative consequences of principal turnover included disruption and instability to the school’s climate and culture, increased teacher turnover, and declines in student achievement (Babo & Postma, 2017; Baptiste, 2019; Bartanen et al., 2019; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Brown, 2016; Day et al., 2016). However, turnover may have a positive influence on the school learning environment when the outgoing principal is replaced with a more experienced principal (Bartanen et al., 2019). A positive outcome also occurs when an ineffective principal is removed from their post.

Motivation and Hygiene Factors of Principal Turnover

Turnover may be a consideration of personal preference for an administrator. Individual decisions to remain at a school location may be influenced by a principal's desire to serve in the same school, move to another location, or seek a promotion. Being satisfied and serving in the same school for a longer period of time is based on motivational and hygiene factors that may attract a principal to continue serving in the same school. However, if hygiene factors are not favorable, the principal may choose to move, seek a transfer to another campus, or retire (Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019). Therefore, school district and state leaders need to determine factors of employee turnover to identify characteristics that motivate an individual toward job satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employment.

School characteristics influence principal turnover. Alenezi (2020) posited that school principal turnover limits a school's substantial progress influenced by unclear vision definitions and improper location of resources for the replaced principals before understanding the school. Alenezi used data from the National Center for Education Statistics School and Staffing Survey 2011-2012 to analyze 37 predictor variables and their influence on principal turnover using logistic regression to determine high- and low-risk factors of principal turnover. Alenezi found that of the 37 predictors studied, eight predictors significantly influenced principal turnover. The significant predictive factors to influence principal turnover were (a) the age of the principal, (b) the principal's gender, (c) the race of the principal, (d) the principal's highest degree attained, (e) whether the principal participated in an aspiring principal program, (f) the working conditions and

environment of the school, (g) the level of access to the building, and (h) the amount of time spent on administrative tasks. Specifically, principals more likely to leave were male, an ethnic minority, did not participate in an aspiring principal program, or had a doctoral degree. Alenezi asserted that district leaders should identify and mitigate the factors that influence principal turnover. Accomplishing this task would allow districts and states to solve for factors that increase turnover and limit the consequences attributed to transition when a principal leaves the school.

The role of a principal and the demands of the school may influence the desire of a principal to continue serving in the same school, request a transfer, or leave the position. The principal's inability to meet the needs of a school may influence turnover. Retention rates are also determined by other motivational and hygiene factors related to the school and organization. Principal effectiveness data and evaluations are often tied to student achievement; therefore, recruitment and retention of school principals have become a central area of focus for school districts (Babo & Postma, 2017). Recruitment is the process of searching for competent and qualified candidates to apply for a vacancy for consideration (West et al., 2019). Successful candidates are hired based on merit and other qualifications defined by the organization. Retention requires policies that increase job satisfaction to avoid losing talented and competent personnel. Retention of principals is based on understanding the needs of employees and mitigating factors that negatively affect their well-being while ensuring the school community's needs are also satisfied. Therefore, as states focus on the recruitment and retention of principals, state leaders must understand and address motivational and hygiene factors to reduce turnover and

encourage retention. In the following sections, I explore the various motivational and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1974) that encourage principals to remain in their position or influence their dissatisfaction in their role.

Motivation Factors Related to Principal Turnover

According to Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory, motivation factors are intrinsic workplace needs that increase job satisfaction. Motivation factors include opportunities for advancement, recognition, autonomy, and the work itself (Herzberg, 1974). The absence of these factors increases job dissatisfaction and workplace instability. Principal stability in their administrative role plays an important part to ensuring the overall school's stability. Principal retention influences the overall school culture and climate, teacher retention, instructional practices, and student achievement (Goldring & Taie, 2018; Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Levin et al., 2020; Tran, 2017). Peer-reviewed literature concerning what motivates school administrators to choose to stay in their roles has offered differing explanations. Researchers' findings provided evidence that principals who remained in the profession identified a higher purpose and calling (Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020), salary (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Tran, 2017), and influences on student achievement (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Swen, 2020). In the following sections, I provide findings from the peer-reviewed literature that provide reasons principals remained in the profession.

A Higher Purpose, Calling, and Resilience. The principal role is often linked to intangible motivational factors, such as fulfilling a higher calling to make the world a better place by educating the generation's youth (Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). Some

principals understood the intricacies of their administrative role, appreciated the challenge of its complexity, and cited a higher motivation to remain within their position. Other administrators revealed a mature leadership characteristic that allowed them to maintain flexibility and perseverance in their role as principal (Terosky et al., 2021).

In the fields of psychology and organizational behavior, a sense of calling is a new concept. Because the construct of calling was fairly new to the education sector, Jain and Kaur (2021) created a scale to understand what educators meant when they said they stayed in the educational arena because of a calling. As a result of their study, Jain and Kaur developed a 10-item scale to measure calling and its effect on work engagement and retention. The researchers collected responses from 425 educators. Based on Jain and Kaur's findings, the path coefficient between calling and work engagement was 0.498, and the *t*-value was 8.08, which was larger than 1.96, showing that the two variables were statistically significant. The researchers posited that educators who cited a sense of calling as a reason they remained in their role had higher engagement and commitment to the overall work, thus increasing retention in their role.

This sense of personal commitment to the role of principal leadership was investigated using a qualitative approach. Swen (2020) interviewed 35 novice principals from Chicago, who identified this higher motivation as a "calling" (p. 184). To describe their reasons for staying in the profession, principals used words such as "duty," "destiny," and "fulfillment." The principals also expressed that despite administrative pressure for students to attain high academic achievement on state-mandated assessments, stress of accountability measures, difficulty obtaining necessary resources,

and challenges with retaining top talent in their schools, other intangible reasons led them to remain in the profession.

Jondle (2021) found that high school principals, when presented with similar challenges, articulated a calling and higher purpose as reasons to remain in their roles. Although a significant number of high school principals in the study resigned from their administrative positions and cited the unsustainable work environment and complexity in their roles, others chose to remain and withstand the challenges of a demanding job. Jondle noted principals in the study cited situational awareness as an additional factor that enabled them to remain in their position. Principals who were aware of the challenges and complexity of their roles developed mechanisms of mitigating the challenges to navigate through their multifaceted roles. The principals who stayed in their position as school administrator developed flexibility to the changing role of the principal and did not find their roles challenging because they adapted to the changing landscape of their administrative positions. Principals who were able to accept ambiguity in their roles and displayed flexibility remained at their schools for more than 5 years, without choosing to resign despite the pressure, complexity, and instability of their roles (Jondle, 2021).

Along with a sense of calling, resilience is a reason principals remained in the position. In a study conducted by Terosky et al. (2021), principals revealed that a sense of hope and renewal encouraged vitality and resilience in their position. Principals identified the summer season as a time to renew and attend to higher level planning. The principal

participants also noted that this period of renewal gave them energy and increased hope to begin the next school year.

Although the role of principal may be seen as challenging, principals often have cited intangible factors such as a calling, a higher purpose, and resilience as why they enter and remain in their role (Jain & Kaur, 2021; Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020; Terosky et al., 2021). The intrinsic motivators of a sense of calling, a higher purpose, and resilience increase overall work engagement and commitment to the organization (Jain & Kaur, 2021). When principals are intrinsically motivated to engage in their work, they are more likely to remain in their leadership roles, resulting in less turnover in the position.

Salary. Reimbursement is a motivational factor of candidates to apply for and remain in a principal leadership position. De Jong et al. (2017) surveyed 174 secondary school principals and asked the principals for factors they considered when deciding not to leave their position as a principal. High job demands with excessive expectations, challenging stakeholders, a difficult work-to-life balance, and a lack of support were all mentioned by principals as factors promoting job dissatisfaction. Of the principals surveyed, 33% cited salary and benefits as a reason they remained in the position. Therefore, salary served as a persuasive factor of principal retention.

Hancock et al. (2019) conducted a mixed methods study to examine the motivation of principals in Germany and the United States to become school leaders. Although Hancock acknowledged differences between the participants of this study from the two different countries, among the nine factors given by the principals, salary was identified as a statistically significant factor in why the participants in both countries

chose their role as a school principal. However, the effect size was higher for the U.S. principals when compared to German principals.

In a study of 156 California principals, Tran (2017) found that principal perceptions of pay satisfaction and turnover intentions had a negative relationship. Principals who were dissatisfied with their salary were more likely to want to leave their jobs, which had implications for principal retention. However, Tran also found the converse true; principals who were satisfied with their salaries were less likely to leave their principal role.

A district's ability to provide competitive pay for school leaders may influence turnover. Levin et al. (2020) conducted interviews with 424 secondary principals and six focus groups that comprised a total of 33 principals from across 26 different states. The researchers found increased salary opportunity was a deciding factor to remain in the administrative role. Competitive pay that reflected the breadth of principals' responsibilities and their numerous roles helped to attract and retain school leaders (Levin et al., 2020). The study participants considered financial compensation to include not only a monthly salary, but also additional reimbursement opportunities that made the position appealing. For example, additional vacation time and increased benefits were seen as a comprehensive salary package that encouraged principals to step into or remain in the role. Based on the findings from the study, salary could be considered as a hygiene factor that may increase job satisfaction and reduce principal turnover.

Influence on Student Achievement. Along with intangible factors frequently referred to as a calling or higher purpose, principals cited a commitment to student

achievement and progress as motivational factors that encouraged them to remain in the administrator's role. Despite the growing pressures of accountability measures and standardized testing, principals have focused on a desire to grow teachers' instructional skills and improve students' academic achievement. This development is often measured through standardized tests and various data points throughout the year. Principals use these data to determine their immediate effect on the learning environment. Although the pressure to have students perform could be viewed as a hygiene factor, many principals say that their influence on student achievement motivates them to remain within the profession (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Swen, 2020).

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment to the students and school community also have been attributed as reasons why principals remain in their leadership role. A deep commitment to effective teaching practices and student learning encourages principals to continue their administrative roles despite increased workload and burnout (Jondle, 2021). Liu and Bellibas (2018) conducted an international study to determine factors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of principals. Using the Teaching and Learning International Survey, the researchers analyzed data from 34 countries, including the United States. Liu and Bellibas found that building staff capacity to support instruction was associated with positive job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Liu and Bellibas also found that supporting students in low-socioeconomic communities increased the principals' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Altogether, the study supported evidence that principals remained in their schools to

maintain and ensure the continued process of learning and growth to increase student achievement.

In summary, researchers who examined factors that encouraged principals to remain in their roles were aligned in their findings. The common factors that served as motivators included (a) a higher purpose, calling, and resiliency; (b) salary and compensation; and (c) potential positive influences on student learning. These factors may influence principals to remain in their current role as a principal.

Hygiene Factors Related to Principal Turnover

Factors that influence job dissatisfaction also may increase principal turnover. Hygiene factors include extrinsic workplace conditions such as salary, work conditions, educational policy, job status, and work–life balance (Herzberg, 1974). When hygiene factors are not mitigated, principal turnover increases. In the school setting, some of the consequences of principal turnover are experienced in the administration and management of the school. The consequence of principal turnover is exacerbated when an inexperienced principal without the skillset to support a high-needs school replaces an experienced principal. Other consequences of principal job dissatisfaction factors are poor school management and discord during the transition period (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Therefore, district and state leaders need to identify and mitigate hygiene factors of job dissatisfaction for principals to reduce the turnover in the profession.

Principal turnover is either voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary turnover refers to the instances where a principal resigns, leaving their position vacant and resulting in a loss of leadership talent in a school (Goldring & Taie, 2018). An example of a voluntary

turnover is a resignation based on a decision made by the principal without the influence of the employer. An involuntary turnover occurs when a principal is transferred or terminated by the employer. Similarly, as experienced in other organizations, involuntary turnover in the education sector is influenced by factors that mandate an individual to move from their post, role, or assignment as a principal (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Involuntary turnover is determined by factors beyond an individual's control.

With an increase in principal turnover, district and state leaders need to identify the reasons why principals leave the profession. Peters-Hawkins et al. (2018) asserted that principals in districts and schools associated with low principal retention rates expressed concerns with low salaries, accountability measures, stressors from the complexity of the workload, and lack of support from their district supervisors. These implications are reflected in the shortage of principal candidates, negatively affecting leadership in the education system (Alenezi, 2020). When considering the reasons why principals leave the profession, researchers' findings indicated various reasons including (a) stressors from the complexity of the workload; (b) accountability measures; (c) lack of adequate support, training, and professional development; and (d) inadequate salary and compensation. In the proceeding sections, I discuss each of the reasons in more detail.

Stressors From the Complexity of the Workload. A principal's job description is highly complex and consists of job responsibilities other than simply managing the school campus. The principal's task is to ensure that all school variables work in synergy to create the correct conditions for school improvement. Effective principals implement

various administrative duties to ensure schools are successful, including (a) establishing a clear vision to ensure the success of all students, (b) creating a culture and climate conducive to learning, (c) building leadership capacity in other staff members, (d) focusing on school improvement, and (e) managing people and data to ensure school structures are aligned to school improvement (Abowitz, 2019; Hansen, 2018). Hansen (2018) identified formidable workloads as a reason principals left the profession.

Resignation is a common reason for principal turnover (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Because of the complexity and diversity of the administrative role assigned to principals, when the pressure and responsibility becomes unsustainable, some principals opt to resign to relieve themselves of the stress and demands of academic duties. In some instances, resignation is not only based on the demands of the role and the failure to deliver according to expectations, but also is a result of movement from the role of principal to a district-level administrative assignment. For instance, the promotion or moving of a principal from an administrator of a campus to the district office or to other organizations is considered a turnover. Regardless of the reason for administrative turnover, the possible adverse effects of change continue.

A principal's challenge is to ensure the academic needs of students, parents, and policy makers are responsibly handled (Thompson, 2021). This undertaking requires the principal to interpret the complex needs of the school, the community, and policy makers to ensure every aspect of the educational process is functioning in harmony with the other (Riggs, 2017). The complexity and pressure a principal encounters in this leadership role and the creativity and uniqueness required to solve these challenges are additional factors

that influence the workload of a school principal. How a principal handles the challenge of diverse responsibilities also determines the success of the school and may influence turnover.

Burnout is a mental and physical state of exhaustion because of one's job (Freudenberger, 1974). Mestry (2017) conducted a study of educators that detailed the complexity and changes in the roles of principals that lead to stressors that influenced them to leave their administrative positions. The study revealed 70% of the principals agreed that their roles had changed over the previous 5 years, and 75% stated that compared to the previous years, the roles and duties of a principal had changed from traditional to complex (Mestry, 2017). The additional roles of a school administrator, together with the complexity of the job responsibilities, contributed to work pressure and burnout. The stressors of the changing role of principal led to increased turnover for the profession.

Principals in urban areas are under an increased number of stressors that escalate the turnover of administrators. Reitzug and Hewitt (2017) posited that the stressors are amplified for a principal in a high-needs school, where school turnaround is required within a specific time frame and is crucial to the success of the school. In a qualitative study, Mahfouz (2020) interviewed 13 principals to determine the stressors involved in administrative leadership and the coping strategies they used to manage the role of school administrator. Participants of the study identified that constant changes from the school district prompted them to frequently alternate between transactional and transformative leadership styles. The continuous change was seen as frustrating for both experienced and

novice school leaders (Mahfouz, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic also added to the daily challenges principals face such as increased stress from the uncertainty of the learning environment, vacancies due to staff health challenges, and concerns regarding professionals outside of education making decisions concerning schools (Stone-Johnson & Miles Weiner, 2020). Therefore, the hygiene factor of workplace conditions, more specifically stressful working conditions, can increase principal turnover.

Stressors of Accountability Measures. The changes in the role of principal compounded with the stressors, complexities, and accountability of the role also encourage principals to leave the profession. A principal's administrative tasks have become increasingly detailed and complex, making the duties of the role a contributing factor of principal turnover. As a result of increasing accountability measures, principals changed schools or careers, resigned, or retired early (Goldring & Taie, 2018; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018; Tran, 2017). Principals' responsibilities require administrators to be not only the school manager but also an instructional coach, a team builder, an agent of visionary change, and a transformational leader. These increased roles are influenced by state and federal mandates. Increasing accountability measures, including frequent changes to district and state policies, influence principals to leave (Mahfouz, 2020).

Federal accountability measures have changed throughout the years with increased expectations for state education agencies to require school districts to provide equitable learning environments for all students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. As states align policies and regulations to increase accountability measures, principals are tasked with the implementation of these mandates (Babo &

Postma, 2017). Principals now must address the expectations of parents, the district and state, and federal mandates as guided by the policies of education (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Mitani (2018) found that sanctions placed on administrators by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) increased the job-related stressors, which led to job burnout and principal turnover.

Other challenges and responsibilities of principals are the demanding accountability procedures required of the principal and the teacher evaluation system that emphasizes academic performance of the school, teacher competence, and student achievement (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Based on this concept, the competency development roles of the principal are dependent upon the leader's ability to build capacity in staff, collect and analyze data, and monitor the implementation of the curriculum to meet federal, state, and local requirements. Despite the increased responsibilities of principals, these school leaders continue to be required to perform the traditional roles of administration to ensure the school functions effectively. In addition to job responsibilities to be an instructional coach, a team builder, and a human resource manager, the school principal is expected to be an administrator, a public relations expert, a building manager, and a disciplinarian (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Sebastian et al., 2018).

Principal accountability became a major area of concern as outlined in federal policy such as NCLB (2002). According to Mitani (2018), NCLB sanctions were associated with higher levels of stress for principals and increased turnover rates. Sanctions were implemented on schools based on a lack of student performance on state-

mandated assessments. Ahn and Vigdor (2014) found that principals exiting the profession increased from 6% to 18% when the highest level of NCLB sanctions were enforced, which required a full school restructuring. The researchers suggested that federal policy changed the way principals performed their jobs and potentially increased the level of stress and accountability in their role. Mitani also suggested that the increased accountability from NCLB could also have a greater influence on principals of Title I schools because the sanctions affected Title I principals at higher rates. Mitani found that failing schools were 5% more likely to have principal turnover after NCLB sanctions were imposed. Increased sanctions from changing federal accountability measures were found to increase principal turnover.

ESSA (2015) added additional measures for school success that placed further responsibility on the principal to increase student academic achievement. ESSA further clarified the role principals played and the importance of accountability measures to determine principal effectiveness (Elgart, 2016). Although ESSA regulations provided more freedom to determine the best instructional supports for school improvement, these decisions were often the responsibility of each individual school principal (Williams & Welsh, 2017). Williams and Welsh (2017) found that principals cited they appreciated the flexibility the federal government policies allowed. The principals in their study also identified the additional mandates increased pressure for the principals to ensure students performed on high-stakes assessments. These additional responsibilities, when left to novice and inexperienced principals, created additional demands on the instructional environment that resulted in stress and lead to turnover in the principal position

(Williams & Welsh, 2017). The pressures to improve school performance of traditionally underperforming schools have been found to lead to additional turnover of principals and increase the academic performance gap between schools that traditionally met state mandates and underperforming schools that had not traditionally met state mandates. Increased sanctions from federal policies have the potential to affect principal turnover.

The research of Watkins et al. (2021) aligned with the findings of Williams and Welsh (2017). Watkins et al. found that the negative principal perspectives concerning changing federal policies, including increased federal accountability measures, created unrealistic goals for school leaders. The additional mandates also increased the complexity of their administrative role, as principals attempted to balance the directives for accountability with opportunities for innovation (Watkins et al., 2021). Some school leaders were found to perceive federal mandates to encourage autonomy allowing for innovation within their administrative role. Watkins et al. also found that these principals perceived the increased federal accountability allowed them to identify and problem-solve situations concerning equity gaps among schools, focus on teacher and leader professional development, and obtain additional funding to address achievement gaps. Federal mandates were seen as having both positive and negative influences on the role of the principal in the Watkins et al. study.

Altogether, federal and state legislation continues to change but maintains a laser-like focus on school improvement. At the center of school improvement is the principal's ability to successfully translate the legislative mandates into daily actions to bring about school improvement. Although some principals found the additional mandates helpful to

their daily role, many principals found the additional accountability measures as a hygiene factor that encouraged job dissatisfaction (Ahn & Vigdor, 2014; Babo & Postma, 2017; Mahfouz, 2020; Mitani, 2018; Watkins et al., 2021; Williams & Welsh, 2017).

Stressors From Lack of Support, Training, and Professional Development. Besides the requirements and demands of the varied roles the principal is expected to assume, lack of adequate support, training, and professional development are other factors that can make the role of a principal unsustainable (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Lack of proper training coupled with the complex nature of the role of principal produces stress and makes principals' jobs demanding, which further contributes to turnover (Richardson et al., 2016). Alenezi (2020) found that participation in a program for prospective principals was a statistically significant predictor of principal retention. Alenezi found that principals who had participated in a principal preparation program were 30% less likely to turnover.

Tingle et al. (2019) identified a lack of adequate professional development as a reason for principals leaving the profession. Tingle et al. conducted a survey of 59 principals in their 2nd year as principal in an urban school district. The researchers posited that professional learning opportunities, in which principals were equipped with the necessary skills to lead demanding urban schools, had a high influence on principal retention. Because principals are required to be not only instructional leaders but also administrative managers of the school environment, the development of a structure to reinforce the instructional leadership capacity of principals should be a focus for districts and states. Levin et al. (2020) corroborated this finding and stated that approximately a

third of principals surveyed in their research indicated the need for ongoing professional training. Lack of continued administrative professional development leaves principals ill prepared to handle the complex educational working environment. To combat this challenge and increase principal retention, districts and states need to invest in the professional development of principals beyond the initial recruitment of principals into the profession.

Stressors From Salary and Compensation. Pay policies are also a reason principals decide to leave the educational administration. Principal shortages could be result of the highly complex job description of administrators to be performed under stressful workloads, with incommensurate compensation (Tran, 2017). Tran (2017) found a direct relationship between a principal's intent to leave a position and their satisfaction with their pay. Principals who were less satisfied with their current pay were more likely to leave the role as principal. Levin et al. (2020) confirmed Tran's findings in a study of principal retention that found 40% of the principals surveyed identified inadequate compensation as a reason for leaving the profession. Levin et al. found that among the principals in their study, 32% felt the pay was not commensurate to the job responsibilities, and 46% of principals in high-poverty schools believed the workload was not comparable to the salary. Similarly, Goldring and Taie (2018) found 76% of principals agreed with the statement that they would leave their job if they could find a higher paying job. Salary was found to have a direct influence on principals' decisions to stay or leave the principalship.

Despite these findings, other researchers identified compensation as not having a significant bearing on principals' decision to leave the profession (Alenezi, 2020; Yan, 2020). Yan (2020) analyzed data accessed from the National Center for Education Statistics Principal Questionnaire and School District Questionnaire in the School and Staffing Survey from 2011-2012 to determine the relationship between working conditions and various types of principal turnover. Yan confirmed that inadequate principal salary was linked to turnover rates of principals. Yan found that an increase in the principal's salary would "lower the odds" (p. 114) of principal turnover by 53%. This finding is consistent with other research findings related to the influence of principal salary on retention (Goldring & Taie, 2018; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Tran, 2017). However, after controlling for all other variables in the study such as working conditions, disciplinary environment, and school context, Yan's findings indicated that salary did not significantly influence principal turnover. A limitation of the study was using data from a secondary source, which might have included questions not directly aligned to the context of the study. Yan called for additional studies using more rigorous data collection methods and cross-disciplinary theories from economics and psychology to discover the driving forces of principal turnover.

With an increased focus on school transformation and student achievement, concerns have increased regarding school leadership, resulting in studies of principal turnover. Increased accountability measures from NCLB (2002) and ESSA (2015) have increased the stress and complexity of pressure for principals to perform in the role (Ahn & Vigdor, 2014; Babo & Postma, 2017; Mahfouz, 2020; Mitani, 2018; Watkins et al.,

2021; Williams & Welsh, 2017). The increased responsibilities of the principal role and complexities of the workload have influenced principals' decisions to leave or stay in the profession. Several studies revealed that principals leave the profession due to insufficient salaries, lack of district leadership support, and inadequate training and professional development (Alenezi, 2020; Levin et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2019). For this study, Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory provided the theoretical foundation to fill the gap of practice concerning principals' perceptions of factors that influence principal turnover.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provided an overview of the literature relevant to the study along with the use of the theoretical framework of Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory, expanding upon the literature from Chapter 1. The findings in the literature demonstrated how principals play a vital role in creating a conducive climate and culture that ensures students and teachers thrive socially, mentally, physically, and academically. Researchers suggested principals are responsible for the overall strategic direction of the school and student outcomes, and each principal brings unique ideas and vision to the role.

In this literature review, I provided evidence that change in school leadership may produce both positive and negative effects. Turnover in the principal role may have negative consequences on teacher turnover, the overall learning environment, and student achievement (Babo & Postma, 2017; Bartanen et al., 2019; Burkhauser, 2017; Collie et al., 2018; Day et al., 2016; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Park et al., 2019; Sutcher et al., 2017). Principal turnover limits the ability of the school community to commit to the

improvement of school performance through the implementation of new policies (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). However, not all principal turnover result in negative consequences for schools, and some administrative change may result in positive outcomes for schools (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Bartanen et al., 2019; Dalton & Todor, 1979; Grusky, 1960).

Researchers have identified several factors that motivated or increased job dissatisfaction of principals. Motivation factors that influenced principals' decision to remain in the position included a higher purpose calling, career advancement, salary, and influences on student achievement (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). Hygiene factors that increased principal job dissatisfaction included stressors from the complexity of the workload; accountability measures; lack of adequate district support, training, and professional development; and inadequate salary and compensation (Alenezi, 2020; Levin et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2019).

This study fills a gap in the literature about practice by investigating middle and high school principals' perceptions influencing administrator turnover at Title I campuses in a southeastern U.S. state using Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory. The findings from this study provide additional insight on how to support and retain principals in the state, more specifically the state's highest needs schools. In Chapter 3, I address the methodology I used to answer the RQs, including how I recruited and selected participants for the study. I also address the data collection instrument, the process by which I collected data, and the data analysis plan. An important aspect of a qualitative

study is trustworthiness. I describe the strategies I used to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Finally, I explain ethical procedures of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Principal turnover in public schools is an issue throughout the United States. In 2017, 18% of principals did not return to their position the following year, and this percentage increased to 21% for high-poverty schools (Levin et al., 2020). Although turnover may have some benefits (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Bartanen et al., 2019; Dalton & Todor, 1979), it has an overall negative influence on the climate and culture of a school, teacher retention, and student achievement (Babo & Postma, 2017; Baptiste, 2019; Bartanen et al., 2019; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Brown, 2016; Day et al., 2016; Guthery & Bailes, 2022). With the principal's role vital to a school's success, the supervisors of campus leadership and district and state leaders need to understand the motivational and hygiene factors that encourage principals to remain in their positions. Therefore, the purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, the methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical procedures of this study.

Research Design and Rationale

A gap remains in the research about practices that influence turnover of middle and high school principals of Title I schools. In this exploratory qualitative study, I sought to answer two RQs regarding the perceptions of middle and high school principals to determine factors that influence turnover at Title I schools.

RQ1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

RQ2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

Depending on the purpose and intent of a study, a researcher uses either qualitative or quantitative research methods, or both (Yin, 2016). A researcher uses a qualitative design to connect the key concepts, theoretical framework, and data analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research provides data concerning how people perceive and experience the world and make meaning of their experience (Bengtsson, 2016). Therefore, the research tradition I used for this study was an exploratory qualitative study.

Researchers have used quantitative methods to study the phenomenon of principal turnover. A quantitative research design includes numerical data collection and analysis. Some approaches to collect quantitative data include investigating relationships between two or more variables using correlational studies, exploring relationships between variables using multivariate analysis, and employing surveys to gather data from individuals using predetermined questions (Queirós et al., 2017). Each of these methods includes quantifiable data to study a context-specific issue (Yin, 2016). However, none of these methods was suitable to answer the RQs of this study. I used semistructured interviews to understand the perspectives of middle and high school principals and investigate factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. Therefore, a qualitative research design was best suited for this study.

Qualitative methods allow a researcher to collect experiential data in a number of ways (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2016). Qualitative researchers collect data in a natural setting to reveal the lived experiences of a participant. A qualitative approach offers numerous designs from which to choose, including case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory.

I considered a case study approach for this study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined a case study as an extensive collection of data of an event, process, or individuals. Case studies are a useful tool for examining complex situations involving multiple variables (Queirós et al., 2017). To gather data, case study researchers gather data conduct not only interviews, but also observations and document reviews to collaborate the perspectives of the participants (Yin, 2016). Because this study was designed to capture the perspectives of principal participants based on their own experiences using semistructured interviews, a case study was not appropriate for this research.

Ethnography, phenomenological, and grounded theory were also various types of qualitative designs that I considered for this study but determined were not appropriate to explore the perspectives of the principal participants of this study. An ethnography was not an appropriate design because this type of qualitative design is used to study groups of people over an extended period of time to understand the history and culture of a specific population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also considered using a phenomenological design for this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that phenomenological researchers use the research and interview questions to explore the

study phenomenon; the findings are limited to the experiences of the participants rather than opinions, perceptions, perspectives, or thoughts about a topic. Researchers in phenomenological studies seek to understand not only the specific phenomenon, but also the circumstances and conditions that surround the specific phenomenon being studied (Queirós et al., 2017). Phenomenological researchers do not consider thoughts and opinions relevant or reliable to study the essence of a phenomenon (Peoples, 2020). Because I focused on the perceived factors that influence principal turnover, a phenomenological design was not relevant for this study. Additionally, I did not consider a grounded theory design because I did not seek to develop or build a theory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I selected a basic qualitative design for this study to allow myself the freedom to understand the perspectives of the participants through their own lived experiences (see Yin, 216). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that interviews are a conducive activity for qualitative research. Interviews permit the researcher to contextualize phenomena by accessing the point of view of the participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Therefore, I conducted semistructured interviews to understand the perspectives of the principal participants. Through semistructured interviews, this basic qualitative study allowed the principal participants to share their perceptions regarding factors that contribute to principal turnover in Title I schools. Use of a basic qualitative approach allowed me to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a vital role in a qualitative study. As the researcher of this study, I was an observer. Because I was the sole instrument to collect data, I began this exploratory qualitative research by understanding the presence of self in the study (see Sword, 1999). Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined positionality as a researcher's role and identity in relationship to the context and setting of the research.

Within the southeastern U.S. state, I have held several positions, including teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal, during my career. I was employed at one district for over 14 years and have worked in Title I schools throughout my career. For the past 5 years, I have served as principal of a Title I school. Currently, I serve as director of federal programs for a school district within the state. In my current role, I support principals of Title I schools in the planning and implementation of school wide plans and federal budgets. As a former principal in the state, some of the participants were former colleagues of mine; however, I had never supervised the principals I interviewed, and none of the participants serve in the district in which I work.

As a former principal of a Title I school in the southeastern U.S. state, I am aware that I have preconceived thoughts concerning the turnover of principals at Title I schools. Although awareness of my own perceptions, experiences, and biases was important, I was conscious to position myself as a nonbiased researcher to obtain the authentic results that would answer the RQs. Bengtsson (2016) noted that building credibility for data collection and analysis begins at the start of a study and involves self-reflection on the part of the researcher regarding the time, financial capital, and the availability of

resources. I created a positionality memo to recognize the bias I brought to the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Another process I used to manage researcher bias was bracketing. Ahern (1999) defined bracketing as a means to validate the collection and analysis of data. I used bracketing during the interview process to help me identify any potential bias I brought to the study. Bengtsson (2016) asserted that bracketing is a method of study that divides assumptions and allows the researcher to reach logical conclusions. I also created a journal to record any personal thoughts and preconceived ideas to manage my biases (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During the study, I maintained a reflexive journal to document the process for the study, address any questions or uncertainties that arose during the study, and reflect upon the decisions made during the study (see Meyer & Willis, 2019).

Methodology

I used a basic qualitative design to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. The results of this research could have implications for social change by identifying possible root factors of principal turnover. State principal supervisors and district leaders could use this research to provide support to principals in their administrative role. In the following sections, I discuss the participant selection process, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, the plan for data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Participant Selection

The settings for this study were school districts in a southeastern U.S. state. The state is comprised of over 2,300 schools, servicing over 1.6 million students, with over 56% being eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. I used purposive sampling to select participants. I recruited principals from public urban school districts in a metro area based on a professional network and contact information available on public district websites. The participants were Title I middle and high school principals who had been administrators for a minimum of 2 years.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) encouraged researchers to strategically select participants who are knowledgeable of the phenomenon and are able to answer the RQs. Therefore, I purposefully identified and selected 10 middle and high school principals to participate in this study. There are no set guidelines as to the number of participants who should be selected for a qualitative study to reach saturation, with saturation meaning further interviews would yield no additional data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sample size depends on the purpose, research design, topic, and data collection method of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Starks and Trinidad (2007) asserted that the number of participants needed for a study is driven by the goals and purpose of the study and that sample sizes of one to 10 participants in a qualitative study will provide ample data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Therefore, I deemed 10 participants sufficient to answer the RQs for this study.

What follows are the procedures I used to identify, contact, and recruit participants. Following Walden University IRB approval, I used a professional network

and the public contact information posted on district websites to identify principals from various urban public school districts in the metro area. I created a list of 51 principals who met the criteria of a minimum of 2 years as a principal at a Title I middle or high school in the target state. I retrieved the potential participants' emails from their district's public website.

After I created a list of potential candidates from each district's public website, I emailed each principal to solicit their participation in the study. I included the following information in the email: an overview and intent of the study, the method and length of time for the interview, the qualifications to participate, the process to keep participants' identity and data safe and confidential, and a statement of voluntary participation including the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any point. I requested individuals interested in participating in the study reply to the email stating they met the requirements and consented to participate; I asked potential participants to respond to my included Walden email address within 5 days. I followed up by email with the potential recruits who had not responded after 5 days. I worked with the participant to schedule a virtual interview at a convenient time for them. Participants were scheduled for an interview, as described in the next section on the instrumentation used for this study.

Instrumentation

I used semistructured one-on-one interviews with 10 principals to gain the perspectives of middle and high school principals regarding the factors that influence principal turnover in Title I schools. Semistructured interviews were the sole data collection instrument used for this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that

interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to understand and make meaning of the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. No historical or legal documents were used as a data source for this study.

The interview questions allowed me to answer the RQs by gathering the perspectives and experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) of the 10 middle and high school principals. I conducted the interviews using researcher-created open-ended questions (see Appendix). An interview protocol and guide served as an anchor for the discussion and ensured relevance to the RQs. To confirm the data collection process's sufficiency and respond to this study's RQs pertaining to motivation and hygiene factors, the interview questions were aligned to Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory, previously researched literature, and other studies and dissertation interview protocols. I formatted the interview guide and questions to assist me to organize the interview process and provide me with note-taking capabilities.

Saldaña (2016) noted that when used appropriately, the interview guide could serve to lead the conversation and ensure the discussion remains focused on the given phenomenon. Each interview lasted 45–60 min to garner sufficient perspectives to answer the RQs. Interviews should provide enough time for the researcher to participate in a fluid discourse with participants to answer the RQs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, 45–60 min semistructured interviews with probing and open-ended questions would provide adequate time to gather the perspectives of the middle and high school principals. No follow-up interviews were scheduled after the initial interview.

Given the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, I used a videoconferencing program to conduct the interviews. Each interview was recorded with the participant's previous approval. I prepared interview questions to guide the interview to maintain focus on the RQs. Each question included iterative probing questions to ensure credibility of responses (Shenton, 2004). To ensure clarity and content validity, I used a peer-review method with two former principal colleagues to receive feedback regarding possible revisions to interview questions. Yin (2016) asserted that receiving feedback from well-informed peers with a critical lens on a specific topic or methodology strengthens a study. Both peer reviewers provided feedback on the interview questions and protocol to ensure clarity, validity, and alignment with the RQs. I updated the interview protocol and questions in response to their feedback.

The first peer reviewer served as a high school administrator for 5 years and as a principal supervisor for 4 years. This colleague now supports over 30 Title I middle schools as an assistant superintendent in the target state. This reviewer brought the perspective of a principal who remained at a Title I school for more than 2 years and expertise as a district-level principal-support administrator. The second peer reviewer serves as the executive director of special programs and educational supports for a local school district and provides support for all Title I schools within the district. This reviewer also served as a transformational principal in the southeastern state for over 10 years and brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to this study. Both peer reviewers' expertise and perspective provided rich feedback on the alignment and clarity

of the interview protocol and questions to the RQs. After I received feedback from each colleague, I revised the final interview protocol and questions.

To mitigate potential bias, I followed the interview protocol and used the margins of the interview guide to capture the responses of the participants. I also used a reflexive journal to document any participant behaviors or personal thoughts during the interview process. Wall et al. (2004) posited that reflexive journaling allows a researcher to be self-aware of any potential bias.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In qualitative studies, the researcher should study participants in their natural setting (Bengtsson, 2016; Yin, 2016). In this study, I examined the perceptions of middle and high school principals regarding factors that influence the turnover of principals in Title I schools. In the following sections, I describe in detail the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

I used my professional network and accessible contact information on district websites to recruit principals from various public school districts in a large urban area in the target state. I sent 51 potential participants an invitation email with the consent form attached. If the principal met the requirements outlined above and wished to participate, they replied to the email with their consent. Then we scheduled a time to conduct the interview. I selected 10 middle and high school principals who had completed a minimum of 2 years as a principal of a Title I school in the southeastern state. Principal

participation in the study was voluntary, and no incentives were offered to participate. Following are the steps I used to invite participants to be a part of the study:

1. I obtained a letter of approval from Walden University's IRB to conduct the study.
2. I emailed potential candidates, from my Walden email, to provide an overview of the study, consent form, and procedures for scheduling an interview.
3. If responses were lacking after 5 days, I sent a follow-up email to request a response.
4. I obtained each participating principal's consent form via a reply to the email stating they consented and met the criteria to participate in the study.
5. Once participants consented to be part of this study, I sent a reminder email to them 3 days prior to the scheduled date and time and a second confirmation email 24 hours prior to the scheduled date and time.

Prior to conducting the study, I applied to the Walden University IRB to conduct the study and protect the rights of the participants. Once I received the appropriate approvals, I recruited Title I middle and high school principals in a minimum of their 2nd year in the same school. I compiled a list of potential principal candidates, I emailed the candidates with an overview of the study, a consent form, and the process for scheduling their interview day and time. I requested the participant's response within 5 days. However, when I did not receive a response after 5 days, I emailed nonresponsive candidates to request their participation. Once participants provided their consent by

return email and booked their appointment, I sent two reminder emails regarding their designated interview time. I sent the first email 3 days prior to the interview and the second email within 24 hours of the interview day and time. The timeline for the completion of all interviews and consent was 1 month. I anticipated no further interviews for this study; however, I asked each participant to member check the findings of the data analysis by email.

All participation in the study was voluntary. The principals were free to exit the study at any time. Should a principal have wished to leave the study, I planned to communicate with them via email to thank them for their willingness to participate. However, no participants requested to leave the interview. They welcomed the opportunity to provide their input into the RQs of this study.

Procedures for Data Collection

The procedures for data collection involved several steps. First, I conducted the semistructured interviews. After transcribing the interviews within 2 days, I compiled and organized the data to prepare for the analysis process. Then, I performed content analysis to identify codes, categories, and themes. After doing so, I sent the findings of the analysis process to participants for member checking. Finally, I wrote the findings and recommendations from the study.

The goal of this study was to use semistructured interviews to garner the perspectives of middle and high school principals concerning factors that influence principal turnover at Title I middle and high schools. I requested interviews via a videoconferencing program. The videoconference platform offered the ability to record

the interviews. Should the videoconference platform have technical issues and not record, I would use a secondary method to record interviews using a personal voice recorder on my cell phone. I requested that principals reserve a quiet space to participate in the interview process and eliminate as many distractions as possible during the interview. Each interview was expected to last 45–60 min. Should the interview be interrupted for an emergency, I would reschedule an appropriate time at the participant's earliest convenience.

I was the sole interviewer for each participant. Prior to beginning each interview, I discussed the interview protocol and reminded participants that the contents of the interview would be kept confidential by replacing participant names with alphanumeric symbols. I used the interview guide with preplanned questions and potential follow-up questions to guide the conversation. During the interview, I used bracketing to document any biased feelings or thoughts I experienced. After each interview, I wrote reflections in my journal to ensure to account for my biases. Participant information was de-identified along with the target state. All interview documentation are kept on an encrypted external hard drive and saved to a private password-protected web-based drive. The external hard drive is locked in a file cabinet in my home office.

At the conclusion of each interview, I reviewed the recording and transcribed each interview within 2 days to ensure accuracy. After the interviews were transcribed, I analyzed the data and shared the findings with the participants to member check the developed themes. Data analysis followed.

Data Analysis Plan

I sought to answer the following RQs in this study:

RQ1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

RQ2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

After all interviews were conducted, I analyzed the data using content analysis to identify common themes that answered the RQs (see Bengtsson, 2016). The purpose of analysis is to make sense of the data obtained through a procedure that addresses the study's RQs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Content analysis involving decontextualization, recontextualization, categorization, and compilation is "a method that provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314). I used Yin's (2016) five-phase data analysis cycle to organize and analyze the data. These steps are (a) compiling the transcripts, (b) disassembling the data and developing codes, (c) reassembling the data to observe patterns, (d) interpreting the patterns to develop emerging themes, and (e) concluding the analysis process.

Step 1: Compiling the Data

The first phase of Yin's (2016) data analysis cycle is compiling all the data. Orderly data lead to a stronger analysis of the data and rigor in the research (Yin, 2016). Yin encouraged researchers to begin the process by reviewing the original RQs, field notes, reflexive journaling notes, as well as the research from the literature review and

conceptual framework. I transcribed each interview. During the transcription process, I began the analysis process in my mind. Next, I collected and printed all field notes and transcripts. When I began the a priori data analysis, I read the transcripts to identify patterns in the raw data that aligned to the conceptual framework based on Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory. I read the transcripts multiple times to understand and make meaning of the responses in connection to the RQs and conceptual framework. During this process, I wrote notes in the margins and highlighted words and phrases to assist with compiling the data.

Step 2: Disassembling the Data

The second phase of the analytic process is disassembling or decontextualizing the data (Bengtsson, 2016). I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to place selections of the raw data into a table to provide a visual analysis of the data and begin the disassembling process to code the data. Yin (2016) offered tips to start the disassembling process. First, I used a priori coding and identified words from the raw data based on Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory. Next, I used open coding and reviewed common words and phrases from the raw data to document open codes in separate columns on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. According to Saldaña (2016), in qualitative research, a code is a term or a short phrase that symbolically captures the essence of a set of data. The codes allowed me to chunk words from the raw data that assisted me to make meaning of the data for interpretation. I used pivot tables and filters to analyze the open codes in relationship to the a priori codes, allowing me to begin to see connections to the conceptual framework, previous literature, and RQs. This process was iterative and

required going back and forth between the raw data and open codes to further analyze the data.

Step 3: Reassembling the Data

The third phase of Yin's (2016) data analysis process is reassembling the data. During this phase, I began to look for connections and emerging patterns in the data, from the open-coding process, allowing me to break down the data further into more manageable pieces. The outcome of this phase is to discover patterns (Yin, 2016). The reassemble phase is also called reconceptualization (Bengtsson, 2016). In this phase, I used the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and the open codes to observe patterns and connections in the data. This process required several attempts to identify connections between the data and RQs. I used the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to reread and examine the a priori codes and open codes, and I observed pattern codes that developed in the reassembling of the data to create categories (see Bengtsson, 2016). Yin (2016) recommended the researcher continually question decisions, patterns, and concepts in relation to the RQs. This process took several phases of analysis to confirm the codes, observe patterns, and develop categories to ensure an accurate interpretation of the data.

Step 4: Interpreting the Data

The fourth phase of the analysis cycle is interpreting the data. During this phase, themes began to emerge from the raw data and coding that aligned with Herzberg's two-factor theory. This phase requires the researcher to make meaning of the reassembled data and identify and describe themes (Bengtsson, 2016). Constructing themes is a method of grouping the underlying meanings into categories (Bengtsson, 2016;

Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The goal of this phase is to develop a comprehensive interpretation of the data (Yin, 2016). During this phase, revisiting the reassembling phase or even the disassembling phase might be necessary to ensure the interpretation (a) is complete, (b) is fair, (c) is empirically accurate, (d) adds value to the current literature, and (e) is credible (Yin, 2016). To accurately interpret the data, I used the pivot tables of the open codes, pattern codes, and categories from the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in connection to the RQs and identified emerging themes that guided the narrative of the interpretation of the data.

During this phase, I also looked for any discrepant data that conflicted with the emerging themes. I accounted for any inconsistencies in the data and ensured the data were accurately based on the protocols for data collection and analysis provided in this study. This process required me to move back and forth between the phases to reexamine the data to ensure validity and reliability.

Step 5: Developing Conclusions

The final phase of the data analysis cycle is concluding. Yin (2016) defined a conclusion as summarizing statements that broaden ideas and raise the interpretation of the study to a higher conceptual level. Bengtsson (2016) referred to this phase as the compilation stage of content analysis. The results from the interpretation phase and RQs allowed me to use descriptive narratives to present the conclusions of the findings of the study. Bengtsson stated researchers must use the interviewees' own words to guarantee that the original meaning and intent of the data are preserved. Using the interviewees' quotes also increases the validity of the study (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). I

concluded the data analysis and formed findings that answered the RQs of this study based on the raw data and accumulated analysis process (see Yin, 2016).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is substantiated by demonstrating that proper methods and rigor were followed throughout the data gathering and analysis process (Yin, 2016). Trustworthiness also requires alignment among the guiding RQs, conceptual framework, research design, and data analysis process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The goal of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to present trustworthy research to supplement current research regarding middle and high school principals' perceptions regarding factors that influence administrator turnover in Title I schools. To achieve trustworthiness in this study, I used credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the level of trust that may be placed in the accuracy of a study's conclusions. Credibility refers to a set of procedures designed to ensure that the researcher is responsible for all research-related data (Bengtsson, 2016). To build credibility, a researcher must choose the most acceptable data collection strategy and the proper volume of data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). I established credibility through member checking and reflexivity (see Moon et al., 2016).

Member checking is one way to increase credibility in qualitative studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I emailed the findings of the study to all participants to preserve the intent of the interview responses and ensure accuracy of the data analysis. I

asked participants to respond to the email with their approval and confirmation or modifications of the findings. Credibility ensures alignment and accuracy of intended interview responses and findings.

Reflexivity is another way to establish the credibility of a study. Throughout the research investigation, reflexivity is a self-reflective process of recognizing biases and offering explanations for judgments (Yin, 2016). As a former employee in one of the districts in the target state, I developed familiarity with the principals in the target state. Therefore, to increase the credibility of this study, I used a reflexive journal throughout the study to address any issues of bias that might arise during the study. Along with identifying bias, the reflexive journal allowed me to address issues of positionality, ethical dilemmas, and opportunities to fine-tune the interview process (see Meyer & Willis, 2019). This process of reflexivity helped to increase the credibility of this study because I journaled throughout the research process. I used a reflexive journal prior to the study to observe my positionality within the study; during the process as I interviewed the participants; and throughout the data analysis, articulation, and concluding processes of the findings of the study.

Transferability

For a research study to be rigorous, the study must be trustworthy. One method to increase trustworthiness is through transferability. Transferability refers to the capacity of a research study to be applied to various situations or people (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I sought to enhance the credibility and validity of the study by maintaining the fidelity of data recorded, evaluated, and reported in such a way that others could reach the same

results if given the same data. For this study, I used thick descriptions and two participant sources to increase the transferability.

Thick descriptions include a full description of the environment, climate and culture, background, participant selection methods, participant attitudes and reactions, and the data-gathering process in the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Thick descriptions also provide the reader a thorough knowledge of the subject, allowing them to judge whether or not findings apply to their own situation (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Therefore, I included detailed descriptions of the participant selection, data collection, and data analysis process to enhance the transferability of this study.

A second method to accomplish transferability is through the selection of the participants. For this study, I used purposeful sampling to select 10 middle and high principals to share their perceptions concerning factors that influence principal turnover in Title I schools. The two groups of principals from varying grade levels provided two participant sources with a direct connection to the phenomenon and able to answer the RQs. The use of two participant sources and thick descriptions increased the transferability of this study.

Dependability

A qualitative research study's dependability relies on the researcher's strategies to present consistency in collecting and evaluating data, as well as expressing and disseminating findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that dependability is the ability for the study to be consistently reproduced, or the reliability of the findings of a study. A trustworthy study ensures that the data were used

to answer the RQs without bias (Ravitch & Carl, 206). In this study, I used an audit trail, peer debriefers, and reflective journaling to increase the dependability of the study.

Qualitative studies can be difficult to replicate due to the subjective nature of the research design. Therefore, consistent data collection methods, analysis, and reporting of findings are crucial to the dependability of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Dependability is increased when the research process is described in detail sufficiently so that another researcher may duplicate the process (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Therefore, I established an audit trail to describe the sequence of details I used to carry out this research.

To increase dependability of the instrument I developed for this study, I used two colleagues with expertise and experience in Title I schools to review the protocol and interview questions and provide feedback to ensure I could answer the RQs. Peer debriefers improve the study's dependability by making the researcher aware of personal views and opinions that could taint or skew the data's interpretation (Spall, 1998). I used the same debriefers who provided expertise for the interview protocol to give their feedback in the interpretive phase of the study. Each of the debriefers has served as a principal in the target state. I shared the emerging themes with peer debriefers to seek feedback to verify alignment with the conceptual framework and RQs and to identify any discrepant data. To increase dependability and reduce bias of the study, I used quotes from the transcripts of the participant interviews, peer debriefing, and member checking.

Additionally, I used reflexive journaling to increase dependability. Reflexive practices can increase the dependability of a study by revealing the manner in which a

researcher may have influenced how data were collected and conclusions made (Meyer & Willis, 2019). Journaling served as a process to record step-by-step actions used to select participants, collect data, and analyze the data to ensure dependability. This process allows readers to understand the intent and rationale behind decisions I made during the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability increases the trustworthiness of a qualitative study by ensuring the findings accurately represent the participants' views and do not reflect the biases of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To meet confirmability, a study must be structured and authenticated; the conclusions must be appropriately interpreted, with reflexivity or reflection on how the data were obtained and analyzed. Opportunities to increase confirmability of this study included reflexive journaling to identify researcher bias, bracketing, and member checks along with peer debriefing.

To increase confirmability, member checking was used to ensure I accurately interpreted the responses of the participants (see Burkholder et al., 2020). Member checking improves a study's credibility and validity (Saldaña, 2016). As the data collector and analyzer, I was mindful not to insert my personal bias into any parts of the study (Birt et al., 2016). Therefore, by actively integrating the research participants in checking and validating the data findings, the risk of researcher bias could be minimized and credibility increased.

Additionally, I used peer debriefers who were not participants of the study to review the themes alongside the RQs and conceptual framework to validate the alignment

of the findings (see Yin, 2016). Using peer debriefers facilitated confirmable findings and reduced the potential for bias of the analysis process. For this study, I used two peer debriefers who have both served as principals in the target state. These are the same administrators who assisted me with the alignment of the interview questions to the RQs earlier in this study. Including debriefers, who were not participants, to review the themes from the analysis of this study also assisted me to reduce the possibility of bias.

Finally, to increase the trustworthiness of this study, I used bracketing throughout the study to address positionality as the researcher, diminish any bias that might arise during the data collection process, and highlight the decision-making process during the analysis stage. Yin (2016) encouraged researchers to use a specific process to document researcher bias. Bracketing allows the researcher to recognize and address any bias they may bring to the study prior to data collection process to increase the credibility of the findings (Yin, 2016). During the interview process and data analysis stage, I documented any personal thoughts or beliefs that could influence the findings. Therefore, the use of a reflexive journal increased the confirmability of the findings of the study.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures not only protect the participants of a study, but also ensure trustworthiness in the research, data analysis, and findings (Yin, 2016). Ethical procedures were followed throughout the entire process of the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that in a qualitative research project, ethical issues must be incorporated from the initial stages, including the study's strategy and design. To maintain the integrity of the study, I considered solutions to ethical issues that might arise during the

study. For this study, I considered the ethical procedures in place to attain IRB approval, protect participants' identities, and collect data. The IRB approval number for this study is 04-25-22-1046819.

To ensure ethical procedures were followed, I adhered to all processes required to earn Walden University's IRB approval. The IRB guarantees that dissertation proposals adhere to a set of ethical norms implemented by the researcher to safeguard the protection of Walden University, the participants, and the target state. I earned a National Institute of Health Certificate of Completion by reviewing state and federal laws and how to conduct the ethical handling of human participants during a research study. A specific IRB approval process has been established for students of the Advanced Educational Administrative and Leadership Program. As a student of this program, I followed Walden University's IRB regulations by maintaining each participant's anonymity, using caution while securing and maintaining research data, highlighting the usefulness of the research to the participants, and commenting on the study limitations. Once IRB approval was received for this study, I moved forward with ethical procedures to ensure all participants were handled appropriately before, during, and after the study.

The significance of the researcher's duty is to preserve the dignity and safety of study subjects (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I did not engage with any participants prior to receiving IRB approval. Participants did not receive any incentives for their participation in this study. Participants volunteered their time to participate in the study and were not under any undue stress to continue through the study. Participants could rescind participation at any time during the study without consequence. Although I have

professional relationships with some of the participants as a result of my tenure as a principal, I did not supervise any of the participants.

After obtaining IRB approval, I obtained a list of principals who met the participant selection criteria. Once potential participants were identified, I solicited voluntary participation in the study via email. In this email, I included the purpose of the study, participant requirements, and any potential risks and benefits to participating in the study. I received participant consent to conduct research. When participants consented to participate, I outlined the procedures to keep all data confidential during and after the interview process. I answered any participant questions and explained how participants could withdraw from the study. If a participant who had consented to participate in the study decided to withdraw from the study prior to or during the interview process, I would release them with objectivity and welcome another individual from the pool of possible participants to join the study. This study's conclusions would not include any data gathered from the released participant. If a participant missed their scheduled interview time, I would contact them by email to reschedule the interview within 5 days. Disruptions during the interview process were also possible. Should a disruption cause the abrupt ending of the interview process, I would work with the principal participant to reschedule the interview within 5 days or at the participant's earliest convenience. At that point, should the participant not be able to reschedule their interview and wish to withdraw from the study due to schedule restraints, I would thank them for their willingness to participate and release them from the study.

The privacy and identity of study participants must be protected to keep research data and information confidential (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016). To ensure confidentiality of participant identities, I assigned each participant a number. This number was used during the data collection and analysis process. Any personally identifiable information was stored separately from the recordings and transcriptions. As per Walden University protocol, all data will be kept secure in a locked drawer in my home office for 5 years. The same level of security will be applied to audio recordings and data saved on hard drives. After 5 years, I will remove hard disks, delete audio recordings, shred transcripts, and destroy journal notes and research materials pertaining to this qualitative study.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the processes and procedures that I used to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions concerning factors that influence the turnover of principals in Title I schools. I explained the research design and rationale for this basic exploratory qualitative study and the criteria and method to select participants for the study. I used semistructured interviews to gather data that answered the RQs. I used content analysis to analyze and identify emergent categories and themes that aligned with the conceptual framework and answered the RQs. The last portion of this chapter detailed the process I used to address research trustworthiness and ethical standards throughout the study. In Chapter 4, I discuss the setting of the study, the data analysis process, and the findings of the study based on the conceptual framework and RQs.

Chapter 4: Results

Principal retention, more specifically the continued employment of administrators in high-needs schools, is a concern throughout school districts and state educational agencies in the United States. Research indicates that principal turnover negatively influences the academic experiences of staff and students (Babo & Postma, 2017; Bartanen et al., 2019). Therefore, the problem of this study was the high turnover rate of Title I middle and high school principals in a southeastern state. The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. By determining the conditions in schools, districts, and states that improve principals' experiences as leaders of Title I schools, the findings may start a larger discussion about ways to improve retention of middle and high school principals in Title I schools.

I recruited 10 principals with a minimum of 2 years of experience in the same Title I middle or high school. I conducted semistructured interviews to collect data from 10 principals. The conceptual framework used to ground this study was the Herzberg (1974) two-factor theory of motivation. I sought to answer two RQs as part of my investigation of the perceptions of middle and high school principals of Title I schools:

RQ1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

RQ2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

At the conclusion of the interviews, I transcribed the responses and used the raw data to develop codes and categories and identify emerging themes related to the conceptual framework. I used bracketing and a reflexive journal to reflect on any biases that surfaced throughout the data collection and analysis process. In this chapter, I discuss the setting, data collection, and data analysis process. I also explain the analysis of the data and results in relation to the two RQs. The chapter also includes evidence of trustworthiness and a summary of key points along with a transition to Chapter 5.

Setting

At the time of the study, the southeastern U.S. state that was its focus was home to over 1.6 million students. Over 900,000 of those students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The state had over 180 school districts consisting of rural and urban schools. The student demographics of the state were comprised of approximately 37% White students, 36% Black students, 17% Hispanic students, 10% Asian students, and 5% students of other ethnicities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The principals who were the participants of this study served as a principal of a middle or high Title I school within the southeastern state in large urban districts. The principals were purposively selected as participants to answer the two RQs and provide their perspective of the motivation and hygiene factors that influenced them to remain at their Title I middle or high school.

Demographics of the Participants

Participants in this study represented various districts throughout the southeastern U.S. state and had a minimum of 2 years as a principal of a Title I middle or high school. Although all of the schools met the 40% poverty threshold to qualify for a school-wide

Title I designation, five of the school sites were considered 100% poverty schools. The 10 principals had a wide range of experience in education, from 12 to 26 years. Of the 10 principals who participated, six were middle school principals, and four were high school principals. Three of the principals had been principal of their campus for 2 to 3 years, five principals had been at their campus for 4 to 9 years, and the remaining two principals had been a principal at their campus for 10 or more years, suggesting each principal met the requirements of the study and had sufficient experience to answer the RQs. Five participants were female, and five participants were male. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned each participant an alpha numeric identifier. The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 2.

I conducted the interviews over a period of 3 weeks. The interviews stayed within the allotted 45–60 min interview window. Each interview was recorded and transcribed no more than 2 days after the scheduled interview.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Grade level	Years as principal at current site	Years of experience in education	% of economically disadvantaged students at the school site
1	Male	Middle	3	18	40
2	Female	High	2	21	100
3	Male	High	5	21	100
4	Female	High	3	12	93
5	Female	Middle	5	17	45
6	Male	Middle	12	26	100
7	Female	Middle	7	21	92
8	Male	High	9	23	68
9	Male	Middle	10	26	100
10	Female	Middle	7	22	100

Data Collection

During the data collection process, I followed the procedures described in Chapter 3. Following IRB approval (no. 04-25-22-1046819) from Walden University, I used professional network contacts and public information from district sites to contact 51 principals via my Walden University email address. The email included the consent form along with an overview of the study, participant requirements, benefits and potential risks of participation, the voluntary nature of the study, and the process by which their information would be kept confidential. Ten principals responded to the email and consented to participate in the study. Each of the candidates met the minimum requirements to participate in the study, and I worked with each participant to schedule a virtual interview during a time conducive to their schedule. Once the date and time were

set for the interview, I emailed each participant with the details of their interview along with a link to access the virtual interview platform. Three days prior to interview, I emailed the principal a reminder of the day, time, and link to access the interview. Twenty-four hours prior to the interview, I sent another reminder email to the principals.

I took care to align the interview questions to the conceptual framework, Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation, and to narrowly focus each RQ to ensure fidelity (see Appendix). Prior to conducting the interviews, I used a peer debriefer to review the interview questions to provide feedback. I also practiced using the interview protocol and the record feature on the online platform to ensure that each interview process would proceed in a correct manner.

By conducting semistructured interviews, I sought to create an environment in which participants felt comfortable to answer the questions transparently and honestly. I also prepared probing questions to ensure that each RQ could be thoroughly answered with the necessary information and to ensure clarity of the responses. Prior to recording each interview, I requested permission from each participant. At the beginning of the interview, I reviewed the consent form with each participant to ensure that they understood their right to privacy, the voluntary nature of the study, and the potential benefits and risks of the study. Additionally, I provided contact information should they have any further questions or concerns after the interview.

Once participants agreed to participate in the interview, I asked them to share demographic information and provide their background concerning their involvement in education. During the interview, I encouraged participants to speak freely and asked

follow-up questions if I needed additional clarifying information. I conducted the interviews using a virtual platform and used an interview protocol (see Appendix) to organize and guide the interview with each participant. Each interview lasted no more than 60 min. During the interview, I used bracketing on the interview guide to mitigate the risk for bias, and immediately following the interview, I used a reflexive journal to note any thoughts that arose during the interview. All interviews were conducted over a span of 3 weeks, and no follow-up interviews were necessary. I did not experience any unusual or extenuating circumstances during the data collection process.

I recorded the semistructured one-on-one interviews and later transcribed each interview for data analysis. At the conclusion of each interview, I renamed each file to correspond with the identifier I used for the participant and saved the documents to a specific folder on my Google drive. Although the online interview platform included transcription, it was not entirely accurate, so I listened to each recording several times to ensure that the transcribed interviews were accurate and true to what the participant shared. I reread each transcription to become familiar with the content and to support the data analysis phase. I analyzed transcripts to identify codes, classify patterns, develop categories, and develop themes.

Data Analysis

I used content analysis to analyze the interview data. Using a priori, open, and pattern coding (see Bengtsson, 2016), I sought to identify categories from the data. I used the codes to develop emerging themes that addressed the RQs of this study. I aligned the content analysis process with Yin's (2016) five-phase data analysis cycle to compile the

transcripts, disassemble the data, determine open codes, reassemble the data to observe patterns, interpret the patterns to develop categories, and observe the emerging themes. After this iterative process, I concluded the analysis procedure.

Coding Strategy

I performed content analysis (see Bengtsson, 2016) to interpret the data of this basic qualitative study. Specifically, I followed Yin's (2016) five-phase content analysis technique. I compiled, disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted the data to present the themes that revealed the finding of this study (see Yin, 2016).

Step 1: Compiling the Data

For the initial stage of data analysis, I listened to the recordings as I ensured the transcription was accurate. I then printed, read, and reread each transcription; listened to the recording of each interview while reading the hard copy transcription; and reviewed my notes on each participant's interview guide. Rereading the transcripts allowed me not only to familiarize myself with the data, but also to internalize and make sense of the data holistically prior to breaking it into smaller parts (see Bengtsson, 2016). Using the transcriptions, I highlighted and added comments to key phrases and words that aligned to the conceptual framework and those parts of the interview that answered the two RQs regarding motivation factors that influenced principals to remain in their positions and hygiene factors that influenced job dissatisfaction.

Once I highlighted and added comments to the key phrases and words, I imported the key phrases and comments into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I then reread each key phrase and word noting any similarities to Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of

motivation. I began the process of a priori coding the raw data based upon motivation and hygiene factors. Table 3 shows the a priori codes I assigned based on the transcripts.

Table 3

Sample a Priori Coding of Participant Responses

Participant	Interview text excerpt	A priori code
1	The paperwork and documentation is the most strenuous part of being a Title I principal.	Hygiene
2	I'm motivated just by the sheer outcome of the positive factors of seeing students, teachers, and anyone that's involved in the school setting, grow academically as well as socially and emotionally.	Motivation
3	I guess the level of responsibility that falls on the principal becomes too much. And the expectation is too, I guess too rigid and too lofty for the, I guess, the conditions in which we deal with, because you're cutting through poverty, you're cutting through homelessness, and you're cutting through lack of academic preparation, you're cutting into neighborhood conflict and kids that didn't sleep last night, kids that have been in a shootout the night before, the neighborhood fight.	Hygiene
5	My role changed from simply an instructional leader to community advocate, health care provider and informer, and social advocate.	Hygiene
7	Students and their needs motivates me the most. I think that, you know, I take their success really personally.	Motivation
8	All of my work has been in Title I from a teacher, to an AP [assistant principal], and now currently a principal. And so, this is just the work that I feel like I was called to do so, I enjoy it.	Motivation

Step 2: Disassembling the Data

Decontextualization or disassembling of the data is the second step in analyzing data, which is a fluid process that allows the researcher to develop open codes, create subcategories, and identify emerging themes (see Bengtsson, 2016). A code is a word or a brief phrase that symbolically captures the core essence of a set of data in qualitative research (Saldaña, 2016). For this phase of analyzation, I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize the raw data and generate codes. First, I identified terms from the raw data using a priori coding and Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory. Then, I used open coding to record the first set of codes in distinct columns on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analyzed frequent words and phrases from the raw data. In Microsoft Excel, I compared the open codes to the a priori codes using pivot tables and filters, which helped me start to make connections with the conceptual framework, previous research and literature, and RQs. This process was iterative and involved switching back and forth between the raw data and open codes. A sample of the a priori and first set of open codes is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Sample a Priori Coding and Corresponding First Open Codes

A priori code	Open code
Motivation	Academic growth
	Calling and purpose
	Coach and grow
	Community relationships
	Connection to students
	Growth in students
	Help students like themselves
	Leader impact
	Motivate students beyond current grade
	Motivation
	Passion for students
	Student achievement
	Student growth
Hygiene	Assessments
	Below grade level
	Difficult work environment
	District expectations
	District politics
	District requirements
	District stigma
	Funding guidelines
	Inequities
	Lack of district support
	Lack of passion
	Negative stigma
	Paperwork
	Politics
	Role changed
	Stigma
	Teacher vacancies

Again, the disassembling process was fluid and intricate, requiring several iterations to develop codes that emerged into patterns, categories, and then themes. I completed a second round of open coding to ensure I had accurately chunked the data into smaller pieces to effectively align to the a priori coding, RQs, and conceptual framework. After filtering the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and sorting the information by the second code, I used a pivot table to compare the second set of open codes to the first set of open codes. Table 5 provides a sample of the comparison.

Table 5

Sample of First Open Codes and Corresponding Second Open Codes

First open code	Second open code
Calling	Passion and purpose
Heart for kids	
Motivation to help students	
Passion	
Passion for students	
Passionate teachers	
Always wanted to be an educator	Personal connection to the work
Connection to students	
Experience	
Relationships	
Below grade level	Challenging work
Difficult work environment	
Lack of teacher passion	
Role changed	
School violence	
Stigma	
Teacher vacancies	
Assessments	District and state documentation and policy
District and state accountability	
District and state requirements	
District politics	
Lack of equity	
Lack of passion	
Paperwork	
Resources	
Title I documentation	
Vacancies	

The process of disassembling continued for a third round, using the data from the pivot table comparing the second open codes to first set of open codes, required additional coding. I created a pivot table to provide a summary of the codes that I assigned to the data after completing the second round of open coding so that I could make meaning of the data. After seeing how many duplicate codes I had placed under each a priori code, I consolidated some of them during a third round of open coding to give the data a more defined direction. To do this, I had to go back into the raw data, text excerpts, a priori codes, and first and second codes, numerous times, paying attention to particular phrases and words each time to make sure nothing was missed. As a result of the third round of open coding, clear patterns began to emerge.

Step 3: Reassembling the Data

Reassembling the data is the third step in Yin's (2016) data analysis procedure. To further divide the data into more manageable chunks, I started to look for relationships and developed patterns in the data at this phase. These patterns were derived from the prior open-coding process. I looked for patterns and connections in the data using the available codes in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This phase required several attempts to find correlations between the data, RQs, and conceptual framework. I reread and examined the a priori codes and open codes using the sort feature and pivot tables in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and I observed pattern codes that emerged throughout the reassembling of the data to establish categories. During this phase, I assessed data similarities and differences to reduce bias, grouped participant replies based on similar coding, looked for competing or outlier data, and examined data and categories for

consistency and reasonableness (see Yin, 2016). Table 6 provides samples of open coding to categories.

Table 6

Sample of Open Codes and Corresponding Categories

Open code	Category
Calling	Passion and purpose
Passion for students	
Passionate adults	
Similar upbringing	Personal connection to the work
Personal conviction	
Relationships	
Staff growth	Staff and student growth
Student growth	
Community challenges	Challenging work
Staffing challenges	
Policy	District and state documentation and policy
Politics	
Expectations	District expectations and lack of student
Support	

Step 4: Interpreting the Data

Phase 4 of Yin's (2016) data analysis cycle is interpretation. In this stage, the researcher must interpret the reassembled data to discover and articulate themes (Bengtsson, 2016). Using the pivot tables of the open codes, pattern codes, and categories from the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in relation to the RQs, previous research, and the Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation, I was able to analyze the data and identify developing themes that served as a guide for the narrative of the interpretation of the data. For this study, six themes emerged. Based on the conceptual framework, three themes

were identified for motivation factors that influenced principals to remain in their role, and three themes emerged for hygiene factors that influenced job dissatisfaction.

One method used to improve the credibility of qualitative research is member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To maintain the intent of the interview responses and guarantee the accuracy of the data analysis, I contacted each of the participants to share the resulting themes and request feedback. Based on the feedback received, I finalized the themes. Table 8 displays the categories and themes.

Table 7

Categories and Corresponding Theme

Category	Theme
Student growth Staff growth	1. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement.
Passionate commitment to students	2. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived purpose as a motivation factor through (a) passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific "calling."
Personal conviction Desire to support students in similar upbringing	3. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role because of a (a) personal conviction and (b) desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to theirs.
Local community challenges Hire and retain appropriate staff	4. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction.
District expectations District support	5. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the lack of sufficient district engagement to (a) meet district academic expectations and (b) support their role as an administrator as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction.
District and state policies District and state politics	6. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction.

Discrepant Data

In this stage of the data analysis process, I also searched for any contradictory data to the emerging themes. According to Yin (2016), inconsistent data raise doubts regarding the validity of research findings. Therefore, the authenticity of participant responses is crucial to the study. Principals' responses varied based on the experiences and demographics of the principal. However, based on the data analysis process, I did not find any examples of discrepant data that would be contradictory to the emerging themes.

Step 5: Developing Conclusions

The final stage of Yin's (2016) data analysis cycle is the concluding phase. A conclusion is a summary of concepts that elevates the study's interpretation to a more conceptual level (Yin, 2016). Bengtsson (2016) referred to this stage of content analysis as the compilation stage. This phase details the significance of the study and how the results may be applied to similar organizations or situations. Using the Microsoft Excel pivot tables, I derived themes and conclusions from the data that were supported by the frequency of particular words and phrases from the participant interviews.

Themes

Finding connections and relationships between codes by combining and removing codes helped me to construct themes (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I examined the various data to uncover the emergent themes to the RQs of this study to understand middle and high school administrators' perceptions of retention factors at Title I campuses. Based on the data analysis, conceptual framework, and RQs, the following six themes emerged from the data analysis of all participants in the study:

1. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement.
2. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived purpose as a motivation factor through (a) passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific "calling."
3. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role because of a (a) personal conviction and (b) desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to theirs.
4. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction.
5. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the lack of sufficient district engagement to (a) meet district academic expectations and (b) support their role as an administrator as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction.
6. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction.

Results

The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. For this study, I interviewed 10 principals of Title I middle and high schools. Four of the principals were high school principals, and the other six were middle school principals. Using content analysis and Yin's (2016) five-step process to analyze the data, I used open and pattern coding to discover categories that developed into themes. The six themes aligned to the study's conceptual framework, Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation, and the RQs. The RQs for this study were as follows:

RQ1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

RQ2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

In analyzing the data, there were no distinct differences between the responses of middle and high school principals. The principals shared their perceptions of factors that influenced their decision to remain at their Title I campus. Through the analysis of the data, six themes emerged. In the following section, I will review each theme, in detail, to include quotes from the participant interviews.

Research Question 1: Motivating Factors

RQ1 was the following: How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state? Themes 1, 2, and 3 encompass the results for this question.

Theme 1: Opportunities to Influence the School Environment

The first theme that emerged was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement. Each of the 10 principals mentioned how influencing the staff or students served as a motivation factor to remain at the Title I campus. In the following sections, I present the aspects of this theme.

Developing Staff. For Theme 1, two categories emerged through the data analysis. The first category that emerged and served as a motivational factor for principals to remain at their Title I middle or high school campus was the opportunity to influence their school environment through the development of staff. Each of the principals interviewed mentioned their influence on the growth and development of students or staff as a motivation factor. However, three high school and two middle school principals mentioned the growth of adults as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain at their Title I school. For example, Participant 2 mentioned how the growth of individuals motivated them and stated, “So, I’m motivated just by the sheer outcome of the positive factors of seeing students, teachers, and anyone that’s involved in the school setting, grow academically as well as socially and emotionally.”

To guarantee that all students have fair access to effective educational leaders in every school, the state department of education in the target state of this study developed a vision for the state's educational institutions. This vision for school leaders is articulated through the Leader Keys Effectiveness System, which outlines the responsibilities and evaluation measures used to determine the effectiveness of a principal. One of the keys mentioned in the Leader Keys Effectiveness System is instructional leadership. In this key pillar, the principal is required to develop leaders in and out of the classroom. Therefore, principals have a responsibility to focus on the individual growth of the adults in their school. Participant 3 stated, "The other responsibility that I really get excited about is the growth of adults. . . . You have to have high-quality teachers and leaders in the building." Participant 6 shared the importance of being the lead learner of the building to model that staff should continuously strive to grow:

> I love talking with staff members about . . . having a long career in the profession. [I ask teachers about] how [they are] staying abreast of best practices and help them understand that improvement is a process, it is not a destination. Therefore, no one has arrived in the profession. And so when we're having those professional learnings and trainings, I make it a point to be right there with them, because I try to help them understand that I started off as a math teacher and so, I as well need to stay abreast of best practices of what's happening in the classroom.

The development of the adults of the school served as a crucial motivation factor for the principals of this study.

Increasing Student Achievement. The principals not only appreciated seeing their influence on the adults in their buildings, but also enjoyed observing the academic growth of students. All 10 principal participants of this study shared that student growth and development to increase academic achievement was a key motivation factor to remain in the position. The principal's role has a significant influence on how students learn in schools. Participant 1 shared, "The success of our students motivates me the most." Participant 2 shared how the pandemic encouraged them to focus on student achievement:

> After the pandemic, you saw the need where students and parents were struggling, economically and definitely socially. And so coming back in from a global pandemic, I really kind of focused on digging more into what they needed to close the academic and emotional gaps.

Additionally, Participant 3 shared their responsibility to ensure students improved academically under their purview. Participant 3 stated, "Our parents, they don't send their students to school every day to come back home the same way they left them, they want them to be better. So that's my charge." Participant 7 noted a desire to positively affect student achievement by stating, "Definitely seeing student achievement change. Going from having a high population of students who are not achieving and flipping that." Participant 9 explained,

> We can't control what's happening outside of these walls. But, if we can do something to just impact them [students] for that time, that moment, you know, it makes a big difference. And that truly motivates me.

The principals of this study shared that many of their students entered their schools with significant learning deficits. Participant 10 noted,

> The academic piece of the growth, I guess that would be the only part that motivates me to see kids that came in two to three grade levels behind, and we close that gap and are able to see the academic gains of an entire school, growing above a year and a half worth of growth in a year.

Therefore, principals seeing their influence on the learning environment, through students increasing academic achievement, serves as a motivation factor that influences principal retention at Title I middle and high school campuses.

In summary, the theme that middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement aligns with the conceptual framework. These motivating factors, according to Herzberg et al. (1959), include a sense of accomplishment, acknowledgment, responsibility, the work itself, promotion, and chances for both professional and personal improvement. This theme also provides a response to RQ1 regarding principals' perceptions of motivating factors that influenced their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state. Therefore, the principal participants of this study viewed opportunities to influence their school environment as a key motivation factor.

Theme 2: Purpose

The second theme to emerge was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived purpose as a motivation factor through (a) a passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific calling. This theme aligns with the motivation factor of interest in the work of the conceptual framework.

Each of the 10 principal participants, regardless of grade level or years of experience, mentioned various driving factors that motivated them to remain in their role, and at least one of the factors included a love for students, their community, the staff, or a calling. Participant 1 shared, "I have a passion for all walks of life and working with a diverse culture, in my district, which helped my growth in my walk of education." Participant 1 continued,

> Going into education has been a passion for me to reach back into the community, to give those students those same opportunities that was given to me and be able to reach those single-parent kids, and be able to reach those minority kids to express to them and show them that I did it.

Participant 9 shared their love for the profession and stated, "It's really different, but what keeps me coming back is just my passion. I love the kids, they keep me going." Similarly, Participant 3 stated,

> So, I treat every kid as though it's going be a great turnaround story, and unfortunately, sometimes it happens, and then sometimes it just doesn't. But, in those times [when] it [turnaround] happens, it is really fulfilling because you realize that's your purpose in life.

Other principal participants similarly shared their love and passion for the position and community. Participant 4 shared, “[I] fell in love with the level of change that I have been able to make at the leadership level.” Participant 7 explained, “I think it’s really just a love for the work and a love for the people.” Based on principal responses, passion was a driving motivation factor for principals to remain in their role in their Title I middle or high school.

Passion for Students. More specifically, three middle school and two high school principal participants shared their passion and understanding for the students they served. Participant 4 stated,

> I think that anyone that leads in a Title I school has to be passionate about ensuring that students are put first. Students are at the forefront of everything that you do because these students are ones that come to us not knowing what they need, but we’re responsible for giving them and laying the foundation for the things that we know that they need.

In support of this category, Participant 3 observed, “We don’t have bad kids; we just have kids with challenges, but I love them.” Similarly, Participant 9 shared, “You have to have a love for education and kids to remain in this field.” Participant 10 added, “I made the decision that if I could make an impact in some kind of way in somebody’s school for kids that look like we did when we grew up, that it would be my heart work.” Therefore, based on the findings from the content analysis, passion for students is a crucial motivation factor that influences principals’ decisions to remain in their role as principal of a Title I middle or high school.

Passionate Staff. Along with a passion for students, two middle school and two high school principal participants specifically mentioned the importance of having staff who are passionate about students to help align teacher practices and actions to the vision and mission to ensure student success. Participant 1 shared,

> I have a lot of teachers that are passionate about making sure that our kids are educated, that our kids are getting the necessary tools to be successful in life. And so, those external things in that regard are what drives and motivate me. I have a lot of [staff], not only teachers, but other staff personnel, such as my cafeteria workers and my custodial staff. They do their job with a purpose and passion, and they do it because they love what they do.

According to Participant 4, "You have to be intentional about finding staff members that have a heart for children." Participant 7 said, "I look for staff members who are equal in that same passion." Participant 8 stated, "I can tell their [teachers'] passion for the work that we're doing and their commitment to the students that we have." A passionate staff resonated with principal participants as a major factor in principal retention.

Calling. In addition to a passion for staff, community, and students, four of the high school principal participants mentioned the intangible motivational factor of a higher calling as a reason to remain in their position as a high school principal of a Title I campus. According to researchers, educators who reported a sense of calling as a factor in their decision to stay in their position displayed higher levels of engagement and dedication to their profession as a whole, which resulted increased retention (Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). Participant 2 shared, "Being in the Title I school is my choice and my

calling as opposed to being in a non-Title I school." Participant 3 said, "I feel that same sense of accomplishment . . . in terms of me being and doing what I'm called to do. So, that's like those intrinsic things that drive me. This is what I'm called to do." Participant 8, who has over 23 years of experience as a principal and 9 years in the current setting as a middle school administrator, expressed,

> All of my work has been in Title I [schools], from a teacher, to an AP [assistant principal], and now currently a principal. And so, this is just the work that I feel like I was called to do, so I enjoy it.

Participant 4 shared, "This is my life's work, a calling of some sort." These participants perceived a higher calling served as an intrinsic motivation factor to remain as principals at their Title I middle or high school campus.

Theme 2 revealed that middle and high school Title I principals perceived purpose as a motivation factor through (a) passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific calling. The theme also aligned with research from Chapter 2 and Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation. Participant 4 provided a summary for this theme by sharing,

> You have to have a heart for children, and you have to be intentional about finding staff members that have a heart for children. So, you have to make sure as a leader of a Title I building that you're in tune with your community, the community that you serve. You have to get out there in it, and you have to make sure again that you're doing what's best for them each and every day in every aspect of your decision-making.

Therefore, a passion for the community, students, and passionate staff, as well as a higher calling, serve as key motivation factors to influence principals' decisions to remain at their Title I middle and high school campuses in a southeastern U.S. state.

Theme 3: Unique Connection to the School Environment

The third theme that emerged was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role because of a (a) personal conviction and (b) desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to themselves. This theme aligns to Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation.

Personal Conviction. A personal conviction was an important motivation factor the influenced principals to remain in the profession. Each of the 10 principal participants discussed a personal conviction and responsibility that motivated them to remain in their position as a principal of a Title I middle or high school. Participant 1 expressed this personal conviction by stating, "Not to toot my own horn, but if I didn't do it, who would?" Participant 3 echoed the same sentiments:

> But I think even more than that, and I know it almost sounds self-righteous, but it's really not because I feel as if I don't do it [be the principal of their Title I high school], then no one will, right? So it's not the fact that no one can do it. . . . If we [current Title I principals] don't choose to do this work, our kids will just be left out there to dry.

Principals expressed that a personal connection to the work is vital to their longevity in their position. Participant 7, a principal who has 7 years of experience at a

campus with 92% economically disadvantaged students, stated, “It is not easy, and it could be a lot easier to work somewhere else and to do something different. But, if not me, then who?” Participant 8 commented, “For me, this work—people knock it, but it’s rewarding. . . . Kids like this are the most rewarding to work with.” Participant 6, the principal of a school with 100% of students considered economically disadvantaged, explained the following:

> I think the biggest factor for many of us who work in Title I schools is it aligns with our values and beliefs about serving underprivileged children, right? And there’s no way you can be successful in this particular environment if you don’t have some sort of personal connection to that work.

Based on the principal responses, a personal connection to the work serves as a motivation factor that influences principals’ decision to remain at their Title I middle or high school campus.

Students With a Similar Upbringing. During the content analysis, a common category emerged from the data. Based on the raw data collected from the principal interviews, a desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to themselves continued to appear as a common factor among the principal participants. This category aligns to the conceptual framework, specifically the responsibility factor of motivation. Six of the 10 principal participants, three high school and three middle school principals, mentioned the connection between their upbringing and their motivation to remain in the role as a Title I middle or high school principal. Participant 4 shared, “Growing up in Title I schools let me know that there was a need for someone that was

thoughtful that could relate to what the students and staff members were experiencing in a Title I school." Participant 1 contributed the following:

> Going into education has been a passion for me to reach back into the community, to give those students those same opportunities that were given to me . . . and be able to reach those minority kids to express to them and show them that I did it and you can do it too.

Participant 6 also contributed to this element of the theme. When asked what were some intrinsic factors or personal reasons that influenced the participant's decision to remain as a principal at their Title I school, Participant 6 responded,

> A lot of it has to do with my upbringing and understanding the path for young people who come from an environment that is economically disadvantaged. So, it is just the way for me to give back and support those who are kind of on the same path that I was on.

Participant 8 stated simply, "These students are me. They are who I was when I grew up." Participant 7 added,

> I've always been sort of drawn to a population of students similar to my own background in the way in which I grew up. It's definitely my way of making sure that students, like me, have highly effective teaching instruction and now teachers.

Ultimately, the middle and high school Title I principals interviewed perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role. Based on this theme, principals' unique

connection to the school environment was based on two categories: their personal conviction and a desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to themselves. This theme aligns with the conceptual framework in that these motivating factors align with Herzberg's (1974) motivational factor of responsibility. Each of the principals had a personal connection to the work, which allowed them to have a vested interest in remaining in the position. This theme also provides a response to RQ1 regarding principals' perceptions of motivating factors that influenced their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state. Therefore, the principal participants of this study viewed a unique connection to their school environment as a crucial motivation factor to remain in their role.

Research Question 2: Hygiene Factors

The first element of Herzberg's (1974) theory is motivation, as described in Research Question 1. The second element is hygiene factors. Therefore, RQ2 was the following: How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state? Themes 4, 5, and 6 encompass the results for this question.

Theme 4: Demanding Work Requirements

Based on principal perceptions, the fourth theme that emerged was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived the demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction. This theme aligns with the

hygiene factors of the conceptual framework of this study. I present the aspects of this theme in the following sections.

Local Community Challenges. In this study, 80% of principals perceived the work of a Title I principal as challenging, which presented itself as a hygiene factor that influenced their job dissatisfaction. One of the perceived demanding aspects of their work was local issues attributed to the community in which they served as principal. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation served as the anchoring conceptual framework for this study. Based on the conceptual framework, working conditions appeared as a hygiene factor that increases job dissatisfaction. Eight of the ten principals identified community challenges as a barrier and hygiene factor. Participant 2, a principal in the 2nd year of administration at a school where 100% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, expressed concern with community challenges:

> I feel that because the parents don't feel the support, or they don't understand the purpose, they fail to forge a partnership with the school. That drives my dissatisfaction because what they complain about on some avenues is not what's best for kids, and that seems to be the things that everybody else, including district officials and media outlets, focus on.

Participant 1 echoed the same concern by stating, "[Parents] don't want the partnership and understand the partnership. That paralyzes me some days, makes me want to say, you know, why am I doing this? Because it makes you feel that you're not valued." Participant 3 expressed frustration by saying,

> Particularly in a district like my district, the level of poverty that goes along with it [being the principal], because we have to work two to three times harder than maybe some colleagues who are not at Title I schools, and the level of responsibility that falls on the principal becomes too much. And the expectation is too rigid and too lofty for the conditions in which we deal with because you're cutting through poverty, you're cutting through homelessness, you're cutting through lack of academic preparation, and you're cutting into neighborhood conflict.

Participant 4 discussed how the community perception of the school influenced job dissatisfaction by stating, "It's very hurtful, just the perception that the community has when they think about what a Title I school is." Participant 5 shared, "You don't have the real estate agents' and local businesses' support because you are a Title I school. You're probably doing way more work than other schools are doing, but it's a stigma associated with being Title I." Principal 9 further expressed

> People don't consider the type of school that you serve or community that you're coming from. Not saying that our kids can't learn like kids in the more affluent non-Title I schools, but our kids, they have different barriers and challenges that they have to go through and that we must solve for prior to educating them, and that's not considered.

Based on the perceptions of the participants, a majority of the principals perceived challenging work, specifically local community challenges, as a hygiene factor that influenced job dissatisfaction.

Staffing and Community Challenges. Principals perceived staffing and community challenges as a hygiene factor that resulted in increased job dissatisfaction. This category aligned with the Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation. Based on the principal interviews, 80% of the principals identified staff retention or current staff vacancies as a hygiene factor that de-motivated them and increased their job dissatisfaction.

Participant 10 stated, "The turnover rate for Title I teachers, principals, and staff is ridiculous. But we have to do something differently to attract talent, retain talent, and support the talent." Principal 9 discussed frustration with the change in educators during and after the pandemic:

> The teachers didn't want to work anymore. When the pandemic hit, and virtual teaching was an option, it was like, okay, we don't have to work like we did before. Even though I'm providing a different option of teaching, you still have work that you need to do in person. And that was just lost when COVID hit, and that was the frustrating part. Just getting people back to working in person. We're not virtual anymore. We got work we need to do in front of kids. So that was the frustrating part.

Participant 3 expressed concern with teacher shortages after the pandemic began by sharing, "There is this teacher shortage on top of the academic woes that they [students] already experienced. . . . COVID has brought challenges, between the teacher shortage and the heightened learning loss." Participant 5 explained their staffing concerns during the pandemic by sharing, "I had adults who were not teaching children, not

responding to families, not doing those things, and so you [the district] made a decision for me that my teachers could still be remote, that's a little difficult for me." Participant 6 echoed the same sentiments: "You want to get rid of those teachers, but we're in such a crisis with teacher shortages that you have to put the right supports around them to elevate their instructional practices and/or relationships with stakeholders."

Hiring staff also was a challenge for the participants of this study after the pandemic began. Participant 7 expressed the following concern for hiring teachers postpandemic:

> Pre-COVID, the way you selected teachers was all so different. Oftentimes today, when I go into an interview, I feel like I'm the one being interviewed because this candidate has their pick of schools and places. You know, of course, you always want to present your school in a positive light, but something after the pandemic or during the pandemic, something flipped. It's just really different. It's definitely a teacher's market.

Based on the content analysis of the raw data from interviews, middle and high school Title I principals perceived the demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction. This theme also supported the conceptual framework. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation included the hygiene factor of working conditions as resulting in increased job dissatisfaction. This theme answers RQ1 regarding hygiene factors that influence job dissatisfaction. Therefore addressing the challenging work of principals—more specifically, addressing community

and staffing challenges—may influence principals' decisions to remain at their Title I school.

Theme 5: Lack of Sufficient District Support

According to principal perceptions, the fifth theme of this study is that middle and high school Title I principals perceived the lack of sufficient district backing for the local Title I campus to (a) meet district academic expectations and (b) support their role as an administrator as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction. I will describe each of the categories for a lack district engagement in the following sections.

Meeting District Academic Expectations. The first category of the fifth theme was principals driving school improvement to meet the district's academic expectation. The principal serves as the key lever to drive school improvement and student achievement (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). However, 90% of the principals discussed the stringent district academic expectations as a crucial hygiene factor that increased their job dissatisfaction. Participant 10 stated,

> They [district leaders] need to understand that success should look different because we [principals of Title I and non-Title I schools] serve different communities. Being judged on the same metrics and held to the same expectations, as if it's a cookie-cutter society, is an issue that I have in general, which makes it de-motivating. Because I may not ever get to an A on the state indicators, although that's my aim; however, if I went from an F designation to a C designation, given the props that need to be there and make it [the recognition

> and celebration] as big as possible because the deficits were greater and actual growth was greater than some of my counterparts in non-Title I schools.

Participant 9 expressed disdain for the district academic expectations by exclaiming, “The district doesn’t understand what’s going on in your building, but they impose expectations and initiatives that may not serve your students.” Participant 3 explained that students in Title I schools are often two to three grade levels behind upon entry, so they have difficulty meeting district expectations. Participant 3 continued, “Those [district] expectations really make my job difficult, and it annoys me.” Participant 8 described similar difficulties:

> You’re going to have some students that meet those expectations. You’re going to have some students that don’t. But why are you penalizing me for the work when you have a student that’s two grade levels behind, but you expect them to perform at the grade level in which they are [in]?

Participant 5 expressed his concern with district academic expectations by declaring, “The biggest dissatisfaction comes from probably district interactions, because you’re always on a list [for not meeting the expected district student outcomes]. You’re always separate. . . . It almost feels like there is always a target on your back.”

Based on principal perceptions in this study, district academic expectations served as a hygiene factor that increased job dissatisfaction. This category aligns with the conceptual framework and RQ2.

Lack of District Support of the Administrator. Theme 5 revealed a second category that a lack of district support for administrators served as a hygiene factor that

influenced job satisfaction. This category aligns with the conceptual framework. Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation included interpersonal relationships with colleagues and supervisors as a hygiene factor that may influence job dissatisfaction.

Participant 1 shared, "You [the principal] lack that support from the district level often, and you're reaching out to the district level, but they put it back on the school." Participant 5 expressed concern with the lack of district support by mentioning, "I think the biggest dissatisfaction comes from probably district interactions." When asked to share the factor that resulted in the most dissatisfaction, Participant 5 continued,

> How you're treated from your superiors or from the district regarding what you do every day [results in the most dissatisfaction] because sometimes, I think there's a disconnect between upper management and what goes on at the building level when it comes to Title I. Especially when we start talking about the type of kids that we have, I think there's a big disconnect, especially if you have not been in the building and been in the shoes [as a Title I principal], then you wouldn't get it.

Participant 10 stated, "The district has to remove the barriers in order for us to be able to achieve that," referring to getting back to a state of normalcy, post-pandemic. Participant 2 expressed the following concerns about district support:

> When you have a passion for wanting to help students and then, when you look to the district, a lot of times what happens in the Title I school, what comes from a district doesn't really align to the school's needs. So, you're motivated to want to

> help students because I want to see students grow, but when you reach out to the district for resources, a lot of times those resources aren't there.

Participant 4 conveyed, "The major obstacle for me for Title I is the lack of support from the district around parental involvement with our schools, it's very low." When asked to provide the most dissatisfying factor, Participant 6 responded,

> There are a lot of moving parts, and I just feel like sometimes it's a little overwhelming when you have a lot of different things coming at you all at one time. I just think that there should be additional district support to show you how to manage these responsibilities.

In summary, Theme 5 provided a response to the RQ2: How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state? The data analysis of the principals revealed the theme revealing a lack of district engagement. The perceived lack of district assistance included district unrealistic expectations and a lack of comprehensive support for principals at Title I campuses. These hygiene factors aligned to the conceptual framework and served as an indication of hygiene factors that increased principals' job dissatisfaction.

Theme 6: District and State Requirements

The sixth and final theme of this study is that middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction. This theme provided a response to RQ2 related to hygiene factors. This theme aligns with the conceptual framework. Herzberg et al. (1959)

found that organization procedures and policies were hygiene factors that increased job dissatisfaction. In the sections that follow, I will review each of the reasons principals identified district and state requirements as a hygiene factor that increased job dissatisfaction.

District and State Politics. The first category identified in Theme 6 was that principals identified district and state politics as a hygiene factor that increased job dissatisfaction. Principals of this study used words such as politics and bureaucracy to describe their dissatisfaction with district and state requirements. Eight of the 10 principals described district and state politics as a hygiene factor that influenced their dissatisfaction. Participant 8 shared the following when asked to describe the factors that would make them feel dissatisfied with their role as Title I principal:

> The first thing that comes to mind that dissatisfies me is the bureaucracy. We are a huge conglomerate full of schools that alone is a billion-dollar enterprise. When you're that big, there's a lot of bureaucracy that comes along with that. Unfortunately, meeting the requirements of the bureaucracy takes you away from the work that really helps kids to be academically successful.

When asked the same question, Participant 4 responded, "There's a lot of red tape attached to the funding that sometimes prevents you from doing what's best for kids. The political side is what truly demotivates me as a principal." Participant 5 shared a similar sentiment by mentioning concerns with "how often the rules changed from year to year" regarding guidelines and procedures. Participant 5 continued,

> I know that these rules for Title I is coming from the federal government, but once it reaches the district, the person who is over it in the district and the people who work in the federal programs Title I office interpret them. So it's being interpreted in one way and rolled out one way, based on that department's perception of the law.

When asked to share a factor that resulted in job dissatisfaction, Participant 10 added the following comment:

> The politics of education in terms of district board members and decisions are being made based off one community versus [the consideration] is this a need for everyone. Again, that cookie-cutter thing . . . that falls under that political umbrella, but also the sociocultural umbrella of what we see happening, and unfortunately, happening too often. . . . It's all about dollars, but dollars is not about kids.

District and State Policies. The second component of Theme 3 was that district and state policies served as a hygiene factor that resulted in job dissatisfaction. The principal shared their concerns with the amount of paperwork and policies that did not support the students in their buildings. All 10 principals provided responses that identified district and state policies as a dissatisfying factor in their role as a principal.

When asked what resulted in the most dissatisfaction in their role as a Title I principal, Participant 10 shared the following:

> Board decisions that are not decisions based on any of my school's needs. They might have been based on some demographic's needs, but when you feel as if it's

> an injustice or doesn't meet any of your needs, but it's a policy. Now that's a huge pain in my side in terms of supporting that vision of that policy.

Participant 8 stated, "Sometimes it becomes cumbersome to just sit down and just type up all these reports, and do these plans, and analyze this data, and report on this data, and meet about this data, and it just becomes unfulfilling." Participant 7 spoke about their dissatisfaction with district hiring policies and exclaimed,

> District and/or state policies or certain district procedures sometimes create barriers to school improvement that can hinder or make it a little bit slower for you to get to whatever your intended goal is, and those things can become frustrating over time.

When asked to share more regarding the policies that served as a dissatisfying factor, Participant 7 added, "Sometimes those hiring policies can create barriers that keep you from putting individuals in front of students, who would do well."

Participant 1 mentioned that state testing accountability measures also served as a hygiene factor. Participant 1 stated, "[Students] learn by hands-on activities, but then we turn around and test them on paper/pencil, and we measure their growth based on this 1-day paper/pencil assessment. . . . We only have one way of assessing the students' growth." Participant 3 expressed frustration with the numerous assessments required by the district:

> Well, the district says everybody's going to do this one program, but that may not work for my kids. The failing schools have a prescribed thing that we're going to do. And the schools that are not failing—you got choice. It doesn't work that way,

> but it does work that way for them [the district]. We have exit tickets that we put into the system that we track for ELA [English language arts] and mathematics. Then we have what's called blue tickets, which are biweekly assessments. Then we have midpoint assessments, which are the 3-week assessments in between the midterm, which is every 6 weeks. Then we have MAP [Measure of Academic Progress] testing and the Achieve 3,000 program. We have so many required district assessments. You can't even work. The kids get testing fatigue.

Participant 1 added, "I think the paperwork and documentation is the most strenuous part of being a Title I principal." When asked to reflect upon factors that were a source of job dissatisfaction, Participant 2 explained, "It's the red tape [Title I policies] that I have to jump through. It sometimes makes me want to say, let me leave this Title I school." Participant 4 shared, "We have these specific guidelines that we have to follow that sometimes are too stringent for what we need to do for kids. That would be the most dissatisfying."

Middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that influenced decreased job satisfaction. Because this factor aligns with Herzberg's (1974) hygiene factor of district and state educational policy, this theme coalesces with the conceptual framework. Theme 6 also provides a response to RQ2 of this study. Based on principal responses, district and state policies are a critical hygiene factor that increases job dissatisfaction for principals of Title I middle and high schools.

Summary of Research Questions and Themes

In summary, the purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. Based on the content analysis of the data, to answer RQ1, middle and high principals perceived (a) opportunities to influence their school environment, (b) purpose, and (c) a unique connection to their school environment as motivation factors that influenced them to remain in their role as a Title I principal. Alternatively, answering RQ2, middle and high school principals perceived (a) challenging work, (b) lack of district support, and (c) district and state requirements as hygiene factors that increased their job dissatisfaction. Themes 1, 2, and 3 answered RQ1, and Themes 4, 5, and 6 answered RQ2.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important factor of a qualitative study. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is established by providing evidence that appropriate procedures and rigor were used throughout the data collection and processing process (Yin, 2016). Aligning the RQs, conceptual framework, study design, and data analysis procedure is also necessary for trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In the following sections, I will describe the strategies I used to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is the degree to which one may trust the validity of a study's findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility is a collection of procedures intended to ensure that

the researcher responsibly gathers and handles all research-related data (Bengtsson, 2016). As the sole researcher for this study, having a plan with outlined procedures was important to ensure credibility. The participants of this study were Title I middle or high school principals who had a minimum of 2 years' experience as a Title I principal. As I served as a former colleague, but not a supervisor, to some of the participants, procedures were in place to minimize bias and increase credibility. For this study, I used member checking and reflexive journaling to ensure credibility.

One method to improve the credibility of qualitative studies is member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To maintain the intent of the interview responses and guarantee the accuracy of the data analysis, I sent an email with the study's preliminary themes and findings to each participant. I requested that participants reply to the email with their acceptance, confirmation, or disagreement of the findings. Credibility ensures that intended interview responses and findings are accurate and aligned with participant experiences (Bengtsson, 2016).

I kept a reflective journal the entire time I was conducting this study to address any potential bias, which helped to increase the study's trustworthiness. The reflexive notebook enabled me to address positionality issues, ethical dilemmas, and possible ways to improve the interview process (see Meyer & Willis, 2019). Because I kept a reflexive journal during the entire research procedure, this process of reflexivity served to improve the credibility of the research. Prior to the study, as I was interviewing the participants, and during the data analysis, articulation, and closing procedures of the study's findings, I kept a reflexive journal to examine my positionality within the study.

Transferability

Transferability is the capacity to make use of a study's conclusions in a wider context and with different people or organizations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I sought to increase external validity of the study by maintaining the fidelity of the data recorded, evaluated, and reported in such a way that others may achieve the same results if given the same data. To improve transferability, I used descriptive details to share information of the study and data analysis process, including a complete description of the study environment, climate and culture, context, how participants were selected, participant responses, and the data collection process (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, I provided context to the study to include the demographics of the participants, sample size, and limitations of study. The conceptual framework, RQs, and interview protocol were aligned, providing the reader with the opportunity to apply the findings to other groups or phenomena (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For this study, the data aligned with Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory of motivation. I used probing questions during the interview process to obtain thorough responses to the interview questions and solicited a broad group of volunteer participants throughout the metro study region, which widened the range and variety of experiences in reaching conclusions from the data.

Dependability

The reliability of a qualitative research study depends on the researcher's methods for demonstrating consistency in data collection and evaluation, as well as dissemination of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In a reliable study, the researcher ensures that the data used to respond to the RQs were collected and analyzed in a nonbiased manner

(Ravitch & Carl, 206). To strengthen the dependability of the study, I used an audit trail, peer debriefers, and reflexive journaling.

I used a data collection strategy that was fully aligned with the RQs, including an audit trail log (see Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2016). Peer debriefers examined the interview protocol and questions to ensure consistency with the conceptual framework and RQs. The peer debriefers provided feedback, and I modified the interview protocol questions in accordance with their suggestions.

I also practiced the interview protocol with a peer debriefer to familiarize myself with the protocol and identify opportunities to enhance the flow and follow-up probes. When conducting interviews, I used the same procedure with each participant. Each interview was recorded, and as the participants discussed their experiences, I took interview notes. I used an audit trail to accurately record the choices I made during the coding process that resulted in the study's conclusions (see Burkholder et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). To increase dependability, I annotated assumptions and preconceptions in the reflexive journal.

Confirmability

A qualitative study's trustworthiness is increased by confirmability, or the ability to confirm that the findings accurately reflect the perspectives of the participants and do not reveal the researcher's prejudices (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A study must be structured and authenticated, and the conclusions should be appropriately interpreted by reflecting on the methods used to collect and analyze the

data. I used reflexive journaling to detect researcher bias, bracketing, member checks, and peer debriefing to improve the study's confirmability.

As the sole researcher for this study and a former colleague to several of the participants, I needed to be aware of any biases that arose before, during, and after the study. Therefore, to increase confirmability, I maintained a reflexive journal before starting the data collection process, during the interviews, and throughout the data analysis phase. In the interviews, I also employed bracketing to record any bias or preconceived assumptions I encountered (see Starks & Trinidad, 2007). I used the journal to think back on any feelings, ideas, or attitudes as I examined the data. I was able to address bias during the study process with the reflexive notebook I kept throughout the procedure.

Another way to increase confirmability during this study was through peer debriefing and member checking. Prior to conducting the study, I used two peer debriefers to review the alignment of the interview questions with the RQs and conceptual framework. At the conclusion of the data analysis phase, the findings and themes of the study were shared with participants to member check the findings and provide feedback. Using a reflexive journal, bracketing, peer debriefers, and member checking increased the conformability of this study and aided me in accurately portraying participant perspectives and presenting the research findings.

Summary

The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at

Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. Chapter 4 provided the detailed process for data analysis and the findings to understand middle and school principals' perceptions of factors that influenced their decision to remain at a Title I middle or high school. Six themes were identified:

1. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement.
2. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived purpose as a motivation factor through (a) passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific calling.
3. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role because of a (a) personal conviction and (b) desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to theirs.
4. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as a hygiene factor that decreased job satisfaction.
5. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the lack of sufficient district engagement to (a) meet district academic expectations and (b) support their role as an administrator as a hygiene factor that decreased job satisfaction.
6. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that decreased job satisfaction.

The first three themes addressed RQ1. The last three themes addressed RQ2. In Chapter 5, I discuss the data recommendations, the study's limitations, and the potential future implications and social change from the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. I explored the gap in practice in the research literature addressing motivation and hygienic factors that may influence principal turnover at Title I middle and high schools. For this study, I chose a basic qualitative design to explore the participants' perspectives through their own lived experiences (see Yin, 216). Ten middle and high school principals shared their perspectives through semistructured interviews. Each interview was recorded. To increase trustworthiness of the study, I followed the same interview protocol for each participant.

I used Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory of motivation to ground the study and align the RQs with the conceptual framework. Herzberg et al. identified two types of factors that influence employee perceptions of their roles on a job: motivation and hygiene. Motivation factors strengthen employees' commitment to their jobs, and hygiene factors increase their job dissatisfaction. Two RQs underpinned this study:

RQ1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

RQ2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state?

Using Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory of motivation and content analysis, I identified six themes. The three themes related to motivation factors for

participating principals were (a) opportunities to influence their school environment by developing staff and increasing student achievement; (b) purpose through a passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and a specific calling; and (c) a unique connection to their school environment because of a personal conviction and desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to theirs. Three themes identified during the content analysis as hygiene factors that influenced decreased job satisfaction were (a) demanding work requirements to respond to local community challenges and to hire and retain appropriate educators, (b) lack of sufficient district engagement to meet district academic expectations and support their role as an administrator, and (c) district and state politics and policies. The first three themes provided a response to RQ1, and the final three themes provided a response to RQ2. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings, discuss the study's limitations, offer recommendations for further research, discuss implications for social change, and provide a concluding statement to capture the essence of the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

I used a basic qualitative research design to explore the perspectives of Title I middle and high school principals regarding motivation and hygiene factors that influence them to remain in their position. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg (1976) identified working conditions such as advancement, responsibility, achievement, recognition, and the work itself as motivation factors. Conversely, Herzberg named working conditions, work–life balance, district and state educational policy, salary, or relationship with supervisors as hygiene

factors that increased job dissatisfaction. In this study, I identified the motivation and hygiene factors that principals from Title I middle and high schools of a southeastern state identified as workplace factors that may increase or decrease job satisfaction.

Using the 10 interview transcripts, I analyzed and sorted the data into codes, categories, and themes. At the conclusion of the study, I discovered that the six emergent themes aligned to the peer-reviewed literature, which was discussed in Chapter 2, and to the conceptual framework. The findings are also congruent with Herzberg's (1976) two-factor theory of motivation.

Motivation Factors

The first three themes identified in this study provided a response to RQ1: How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state? The findings of this study indicate that the participating middle and high school Title I principals perceived (a) opportunities to influence their school environment, (b) a purpose and calling, and (c) a unique connection to their school environment as motivation factors that influenced them to remain in their role as a Title I middle or high school principal in a southeastern state. Based on Herzberg et al.'s (1959) paradigm and the seminal literature related to the two-factor theory of motivation, I identified motivation factors as opportunities for advancement, recognition, achievement, interest in the work, level of responsibility, the work itself, and a creative and challenging environment. The first three identified themes of this study aligned with Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation (Herzberg, 1976; Herzberg et al., 1959).

Opportunities to Influence the School Environment

The middle and high school Title I principals in the study perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement. A principal's influence on students' academic performance is second only to that of the classroom teacher (Davis et al., 2017; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Steinberg & Yang, 2019; Tran et al., 2018). The participants in this study stated that their influence on student achievement and their ability to influence the growth of students and staff academically and socially compelled them to remain in their administrative role. Each of the 10 principals expressed that motivating the faculty, staff, and students at their Title I school inspired them each day. Six of the 10 participants specifically stated that observing the development of the staff and being energized to be part of educators' professional growth motivated them. These findings align with the conceptual framework regarding the motivation factor of achievement and responsibility related to the workplace. Herzberg et al. (1959) stated that employees who are engaged in fulfilling their work responsibilities and have opportunities to see positive results from their work remain committed to their jobs and increase their productivity.

The peer-reviewed literature also confirmed the findings that middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor. Researchers have identified aspects of a principal's role that contribute to job satisfaction; these aspects include building the capacity of their staff, receiving an appropriate salary for the work completed, and working in conducive working conditions (Clark, 2017; Grissom et al., 2021; Sun & Ni, 2016). Findings of

other researchers revealed that principals indicated their dedication to the success of their students as motivating factors for continuing in their administrator roles (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Swen, 2020). An international study conducted by Liu and Bellibas (2018) identified factors affecting principals' organizational commitment and work satisfaction and found that providing academic support to students in low-socioeconomic communities enhanced principals' commitment to their organizations and level of job satisfaction. Supporting these findings, in the current study, principals identified opportunities to influence their school environment by supporting student achievement and by developing staff as increasing job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

A Purpose and a Calling

The participating middle and high school Title I principals perceived having purpose as a motivation factor through (a) a passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific calling. The findings of this theme aligned with the conceptual framework and the peer-reviewed literature. In Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, employees who maintain an interest or feel a duty or purpose in their work are challenged and motivated in their work environment. Motivation increases when employees are intrinsically engaged in the daily tasks of their work. Each of the participants of this study identified a deep commitment and passion to influence the students, staff, and communities they served through their daily commitment to their role.

Other researchers have identified that the principal's role is frequently connected to intangible motivators, such as a higher calling to improve the world through educating

the next generation (Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). Despite the challenging and ever-changing role, principals cited a sense of calling, purpose, and perseverance as factors in their motivation to remain in their role (Jondle, 2021). Jain and Kaur (2021) created a 10-point scale to identify the relationship between a calling and work engagement and found the relationship to be statistically significant. Participants in the current study discussed the challenges of a principal's administrative role and how leaders who want to remain in the role of a principal must be passionate about their calling. The findings from this study revealed that administrators perceived having a calling and a purpose gave them an opportunity to support the urban community of their Title I schools and ensure the students they served could experience academic success. The findings of this study aligned with the conceptual framework and peer-reviewed literature regarding motivating factors that influence principals' decisions to remain in the profession.

Unique Connection to the School Environment

The third theme that emerged was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role because of a (a) personal conviction and (b) desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to their background. This theme aligns with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory of motivation in which employees identified responsibility to engage in their work as a motivation factor, which influenced their job satisfaction. Motivation increased when given the responsibility and autonomy to influence not only students and staff but also the community at large. Principals reported that a sense of hope and renewal increased their

vitality and resilience to face the challenges of the administrative position. Principals shared that despite the challenges of their work, they felt intrinsically compelled to remain in their role because of their unique connection to the school environment and community.

The middle and high school principals in this study perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor. This theme highlighted a principal's ability to relate to students through a personal connection based on a similar upbringing. The influence of a principal within a school community has been widely established throughout the literature (Arsanti et al., 2021; Baptiste, 2019; Tran et al., 2018). Terosky et al. (2021) found that principals stayed in their administrative role for a variety of reasons that included resilience and a personal duty to respond to the varying needs of students in the community. Day et al. (2016) observed, in a mixed-methods study, that a principal might positively influence student outcomes if they were receptive to recognizing student needs and had a personal understanding of the needs of school personnel and students. The findings of this study aligned with the peer-reviewed literature and conceptual framework that revealed a unique connection of principals to their school environment through a personal connection and desire to serve students with a similar upbringing, resulting in an increased commitment to their role. This motivating factor influenced their decision to remain as a Title I middle or high school principal.

Hygiene Factors

Themes 4, 5, and 6 of this study provide a response to RQ2: How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene factors that influence decreased job satisfaction

at their Title I school in a southeastern U.S. state? The final themes of this study identified that middle and high school Title I principals perceived (a) demanding work requirements to respond to local community challenges and to hire and retain appropriate educators, (b) lack of sufficient district engagement to meet district academic expectations and support their role as an administrator, and (c) district and state politics and policies as hygiene factors that influenced decreased job satisfaction. In addition to identifying motivation factors, Herzberg et al. (1959) identified eight dissatisfying factors known as hygiene factors. The hygiene factors included working conditions, work–life balance, district and state educational policy, job status and security, interpersonal relationships with colleagues, compensation, and supervisory relationships. In response to the second RQ, the three themes developed in this study align with the conceptual framework's hygiene factors of working conditions, supervisory relationships, work–life balance, and district and state educational policy.

Challenging Work

The fourth theme that emerged as a result of the data analysis was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as hygiene factors. These hygiene factors contribute to decreased job satisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959) identified working conditions and work–life balance as hygiene factors that increase individuals' job dissatisfaction. Participants of this study shared the difficulties they faced leading schools in high-poverty neighborhoods. The findings of this study also revealed that extended work hours and responsibilities beyond the normal work week

negatively influenced the principals' work–life balance. This theme was confirmed through the peer-reviewed literature and the conceptual framework.

Researchers identified that stressors from the complexity of the workload increased principal turnover (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Thompson, 2021). According to Babo and Postma (2017), numerous job responsibilities make the role of school principal one of the most challenging administrative positions in education. Reitzug and Hewitt (2017) revealed that these stressors are increased for a principal in a high-needs school because students in high-poverty areas frequently enter school unprepared to learn. Student academic deficits add to the stressors and complexity of the workload of a principal (Acton, 2018). Hart and Risley (2003) found that students in high-poverty homes start school having heard 30 million fewer words than their counterparts in less impoverished communities, which continues to encumber students' academic success throughout their time in school. Because of the academic and social-emotional deficits students experience living in poverty, urban school districts must provide additional developmental supports for students before, during, and after the school day (Malin & Hackmann, 2017), which add to the stressors and complexity of principals' workload. The findings of this study revealed that students' academic challenges increased the complexity of the administrative role of Title I principals and made achievement of certain district and state academic goals difficult to attain.

Along with the challenging demands of the work, the findings of this study identified staffing challenges as a hygiene factor. Many of the staffing problems were exacerbated by the global pandemic. According to the peer-reviewed literature, the

COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the daily difficulties principals experienced in addition to their normal workload difficulties (Stone-Johnson & Miles Weiner, 2020). In their responses to the interview questions, principal participants confirmed the staffing issues resulting from the global pandemic either increased their motivation to remain in the role or increased their job dissatisfaction. The findings of this study revealed that eight of the 10 principals perceived staff turnover or vacancies were a major element that lowered their motivation and heightened their level of job dissatisfaction. These participants also shared that staffing challenges increased because of the global pandemic, making their work even more challenging. The findings of this study revealed demanding work requirements related to community challenges and staffing issues as hygiene factors that increased job stress.

Lack of Sufficient District Support

When provided high levels of support, principals have higher levels of work satisfaction (Beausaert et al., 2016). Theme 5 of this study was that middle and high school Title I principals perceived a lack of sufficient district engagement to (a) meet district academic expectations and (b) support in their role as an administrator as a hygiene factor that led to decreased job satisfaction. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory of motivation identified supervisor relationships and district policy as hygiene factors that increased job dissatisfaction. Herzberg et al. found that interpersonal relationships with a supervisor, company policies, and mandates may increase employee job dissatisfaction. Nine out of the 10 principals in this study identified stringent district

expectations and a lack of district support as hygiene factors that increased job dissatisfaction.

Snodgrass Rangel (2018) found that a principal's role may become untenable because of factors such as inadequate support, training, and professional growth in addition to the pressures and expectations of the various roles they are expected fulfill. Alenezi (2020) identified eight factors that were significant predicators of principal turnover, including working conditions and supervisor support. Peters-Hawkins et al. (2018) confirmed the findings of this current study. The findings of Snodgrass Rangel, Alenezi, and Peter-Hawkins et al. affirmed that districts and schools with high principal turnover were associated with high job-related stressors in connection with the complexity of the workload and a lack of support from district supervisors. Simon et al. (2019) asserted that principals who experienced a lack of support from district officials felt isolated because of their demanding administrative role.

Although the principals of Title I schools in this study required support from their district leaders, they felt the support they received from the district did not meet the unique needs of the school or the assistance needed by the principals. The findings of this study aligned with the peer-reviewed literature and conceptual framework related to a lack of sufficient district engagement to support their role as an administrator of a Title I school to meet district academic expectations. These hygiene factors contributed to decreased job satisfaction.

District and State Requirements

The final theme of this study is that middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that influenced increased job dissatisfaction. This theme was confirmed throughout the peer-reviewed literature as well as in Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory of motivation. Herzberg et al. identified district and state educational policy as a hygiene factor that results in increased job dissatisfaction.

The peer-reviewed literature identified that state sanctions from NCLB were linked to higher principal stress levels and higher turnover rates (Ahn & Vigdor, 2014; Mitani, 2018). ESSA (2015) requirements increased flexibility with states and districts; however, accountability to improve standardized testing scores increased. Increased accountability measures from the federal and state governments are reasons for increased stress and turnover in the field of education (Babo & Postma, 2017; Mitani, 2018; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). These additional responsibilities had a significant effect on novice and inexperienced principals when placed in demanding learning environments, producing stress and resulting in principal turnover (Williams & Welsh, 2017).

The perceptions of eight of the 10 principals confirmed the peer-reviewed literature and conceptual framework by naming district and state politics as a hygiene factor that influenced job dissatisfaction. Principals used such words as "red tape," "politics," and "excessive paperwork" to describe the district policies that created barriers to school improvement and often impeded on their responsibilities to ensure the academic success of the students. The peer-reviewed literature and conceptual framework aligned

with the sixth theme of this study that middle and high school principals perceived district and state politics and policies as hygiene factors that increased job dissatisfaction.

In summary, six themes emerged from the data analysis of the 10 semistructured interviews with middle and high school Title I principals. Themes 1–3 answered RQ1 based on the principals' perceptions regarding motivation factors that influenced their decision to remain at their Title I schools. Themes 4–6 addressed RQ2 and revealed the hygiene factors that decreased the principals' job satisfaction based on perceptions of their role as the leaders of their Title I schools. The essential findings of this study corroborate the peer-reviewed literature and conceptual framework of the study that identified motivation and hygiene factors that either motivated principals to remain in their role or increased job dissatisfaction. These findings emphasized the importance of motivation factors such as a principal's connection to the school environment, purpose and passion, and opportunities to increase student achievement and build the capacity of their staff. The findings also emphasized the importance of decreasing hygiene factors such as demanding work requirements, lack of district engagement, and bureaucratic politics and policies from the district and state to increase job satisfaction and retain school leaders.

Limitations of the Study

Each methodological approach has limitations to a study that are out of the researcher's control (Yin, 2016). Limitations are the result of potential flaws or weaknesses in the study; disclosing the limitations helps the reader interpret the results

(Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). The sample size of study participants, researcher bias, and confirmability were three limitations of this study.

The limited sample size of 10 middle and high school principals in Title I schools is the study's first limitation. According to Ellis and Levy (2009), a small sample size would limit the study's transferability to different contexts. Consequently, this study's limited sample size could be considered a limitation. However, qualitative research only requires a small sample of up to 10 participants, who are purposefully selected because they fit the requirements of having knowledge of the topic under study and being able to address the RQs (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). I purposefully selected participants for this study who had a minimum of 2 years as a principal of a Title I middle or high school in the southeastern state. To answer the RQs, I made sure to select principals who met the selection criteria and had a range of experience in both education and leadership. Because of the participants' varied experiences, I acquired numerous viewpoints and corroborated my findings. I conducted a semistructured interview with each principal to understand their perspectives of motivation and hygiene factors that either motivated them to remain in their position or increased their job dissatisfaction.

A second limitation of qualitative research is the involvement of the researcher in the study. It is important to state a researcher's positionality in a qualitative study because knowing the relationship of the researcher to the study provides information concerning how the researcher shaped the study, collected data, and interpreted the findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I was the sole data collector of the data for this study. Although I knew

some of the principal participants, I never had a supervisory role over any of the participants. To decrease bias, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the study in which I described the procedures followed, clarified any ambiguities or problems, and considered the choices I had taken (see Meyer & Willis, 2019). I also used bracketing during the interview to ensure I only included the perspectives of the participants. Even though I took these steps to assure the reliability of this study, personal bias and perspectives might have emerged into the data analysis and findings, which could be a limitation of this research.

This study's confirmability is one of three potential limitations. Confirmability is essential in a qualitative study because it offers a way for the findings to be supported by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). When conducting the interviews, transcribing the interviews, and analyzing the data, I used a reflexive journal and bracketing to note any biased thoughts or feelings that could have influenced the study's credibility (see Ahern, 1999). To increase the study's credibility, I had former principals, who were not participants in the study, act as peer debriefers to review the interview protocol and themes (see Yin, 2016). Additionally, after the data analysis was completed, I asked each participant to member check the findings that emerged. Using member checking and peer debriefing to ensure the study's data accurately reflected the participants' experiences, I could corroborate the findings (see Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016).

Recommendations

This study added to the research about practice concerning the perceptions of middle and high school Title I principals regarding motivation and hygiene factors that influence them to either remain in their role as a Title I principal or increase their job dissatisfaction. The peer-reviewed literature revealed that principals who are intrinsically motivated by various factors tend to remain in the profession (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). The findings of this study confirmed and further identified motivation factors that influenced principals to remain in the profession.

Although research studies have been published about principal retention, an opportunity remains to conduct further research into the topic. The peer-reviewed literature in Chapter 2 identified several motivation and hygiene factors of principals. However, a recommendation is to conduct future quantitative and mixed methods studies focused on the motivation and hygiene factors of principals in high-needs schools to provide additional insight into the topic. A second recommendation is to conduct additional qualitative studies to add to the limited peer-reviewed literature focused on principal retention. Qualitative studies are needed to study the motivation and hygiene factors of non-Title I schools whose principals have remained in the role. The findings of these studies may be compared to this study to determine similarities and differences based on Title I and non-Title I schools. A third recommendation would be to conduct future studies to investigate how district leaders identify and foster motivation factors and

decrease hygiene factors to attract, hire, and retain principals in Title I middle and high schools.

Based on the limited sample size, transferability is limited to middle and high school Title I principals. Although the findings of this study offer useful and important information regarding motivation and hygiene factors that influence middle and high Title I principals to remain in their role, this study did not involve the collection of data from elementary principals or the collection of data from outside of the metro area of the southeastern state. A final recommendation for future studies would be to include elementary Title I principals both inside and outside of the metro area and Title I principals outside of the metro area of the southeastern state.

Implications

The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. The implications of this study may influence the retention of middle and high school Title I principals. Principal turnover affects the stability of the school's culture and atmosphere and consequently student academic achievement (Walsh & Dotter, 2019). Understanding the motivation factors that influence principals to remain in their role and limiting hygiene factors that may increase job dissatisfaction may help district administrators to increase overall retention rates for local school districts and the state. The conclusions developed from this study add to the knowledge base of the gap in literature about practice. The implications of this research,

based on the findings of the study, include methodological implications, recommendations for practice, and applications for positive social change.

Methodological Implications

I used a basic qualitative design to investigate the perceptions of middle and high school Title I principals regarding motivation and hygiene factors that influenced them to remain in their role. Participants provided rich and thick descriptions to share their perceptions of motivation and hygiene factors. However, the results of this study may be supplemented by a larger scale, quantitative study of the motivation and hygiene factors to deepen the understanding of these factors. Conducting this type of study could reduce the gap in practice in the literature regarding motivation factors that influence principals to remain in their role and hygiene factors that decrease their job satisfaction. The implication for using this methodological approach would be quantitative data to support and expand the findings of this study by confirming or providing additional motivation and hygiene factors that may inform district and state leaders of strategies to retain Title I principals.

Practice Implications

The results of this qualitative study revealed three motivation factors that influenced middle and high school principals to remain at their Title I school and three hygiene factors that increased their job dissatisfaction. The findings aligned with the peer-reviewed literature and the conceptual framework that identified a calling, purpose, and influences on student academic achievement as motivation factors (De Jong et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). Stressors from the complexity of

the workload, accountability measures, and lack of adequate district support (Alenezi, 2020; Levin et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2016; Tingle et al., 2019) emerged as hygiene factors. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, the following implications are offered to attract, hire, and retain principals of Title I middle schools based on the findings of this study.

The first implication is directed to school leaders seeking a principalship in a Title I middle or high school and to district leaders looking to attract and hire leaders of Title I schools. All 10 principal participants identified a purpose or calling along with a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor. Higher levels of involvement and passion to their profession, as a whole, were demonstrated by educators who cited a feeling of calling as a reason for their decision to remain in their job, which led to increased retention (Jondle, 2021; Swen, 2020). Passion, purpose, a calling, and unique connection to their school environment are intrinsic motivation factors that leaders should possess to remain in the role of a Title I principal. The data from this study showed that future administrators seeking a principalship of a Title I middle or high school should determine their intrinsic connection to the school community prior to applying for or accepting the principal position. The data of this study also indicated that district leaders should collaborate with school leaders and community stakeholders to align the unique profile and specific competencies in principal candidates with the school and community.

The second implication for practice, as revealed in this study, is for district leaders to seek and retain qualified principals for Title I middle and high schools. Babo

and Postma (2017) discovered that 1 in 5 principals left their position after just 1 year in the role, and this proportion is higher for those working in high-needs schools. Therefore, it is important for district and state leaders to understand the motivation factors that influence principals to remain in their role and recognize the hygiene factors that decrease job satisfaction and result in turnover. District and state leaders may use the findings of this study to determine how to attract principals who are intrinsically motivated to fulfill the role of a Title I middle school or high school principal in the school's community. Along with intrinsic motivators, district and state leaders may use the findings of this study to decrease hygiene factors by identifying the individual factors that motivate each principal to increase productivity and longevity in their role.

The third implication from the findings of this study is that district and state leaders should develop strategies to support principals, particularly those principals who are new to the role, who may face challenging demands of the complex workload and high levels of accountability of district and state obligations and standards. This study revealed that middle and high school Title I principals perceived demanding work requirements, lack of district engagement, district and state policies, and overwhelming accountability measures as hygiene factors that resulted in their job dissatisfaction. Therefore, district leaders should develop personalized professional development opportunities for principals to successfully increase their competence and efficiency with the implementation of the responsibilities of the role. Along with professional opportunities for growth, district leaders should research, design, and implement effective

mentoring and induction programs for novice and struggling principals to increase the retention of Title I middle and high school principals.

A fourth implication may be drawn from the data of this study. District leaders need to provide a nonevaluative principal coach for Title I principals. The findings of this study revealed that principals of Title I schools perceived that district leaders failed to understand the unique challenges they faced because of the intense demands of the socioeconomic needs of their communities. A principal coach could serve as a liaison between the Title I principals and district administrators. These coaches would provide direct support to principals to implement school improvement policies and assist with state and federal requirements. These coaches could also provide information to district leaders to increase understanding, appreciation, and awareness regarding the complex role of Title I principals.

Positive Social Change Implications

This study's implications could influence positive social change at local school districts and the state department of education. Research at Walden University aims to advance positive social change through academic reform and the application of change (Walden University, n.d.). By providing district officials and educational policy makers with recommendations on how to provide support for principals to increase retention in Title I schools, the findings of this study may contribute to positive social change. To ensure that decisions are grounded in the realities of the school and community, district and state stakeholders need to engage in conversations with principals of Title I middle and high schools to inform decisions about strategic improvement planning, resource

allocation, programming, and initiatives. District and state-level administrators need to encourage, respect, and value principal voices.

Principals in this study identified two challenging hygiene factors of Title I campuses: the stress of demanding work related to their urban community environment and ongoing staffing responsibilities to provide competent classroom teachers for their schools. Eight of the 10 principals mentioned local community factors such as homelessness, poverty, and heightened learning loss because of the global pandemic. These hygiene factors are outside of a principal's control; however, they decrease the principal's job satisfaction. This finding identifies a larger issue within the community that district and state leaders need to investigate to provide future community and academic support for the students of Title I schools. Investigation of these factors could lead to larger conversations with administrators who could help to shape local, state, and national policies to create positive social change for urban campuses and communities by increasing the academic achievement of students attending Title I schools.

Conclusion

Principals serve at the focal point of academic, behavioral, and social activities of a school. Teacher retention rates, the stability of the school's culture and climate, and student academic progress are all influenced by principal turnover (Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Walsh & Dotter, 2019). Therefore, district and state leaders need to understand the factors that influence principals to remain in their role.

The purpose of this basic exploratory qualitative study was to investigate middle and high school principals' perceptions of factors influencing administrator turnover at

Title I schools in a southeastern U.S. state. This study addressed a gap in the literature about practice regarding motivation and hygiene factors that influence middle and high school administrator turnover at Title I schools. The findings from this study were the following:

1. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived opportunities to influence their school environment as a motivation factor by (a) developing staff and (b) increasing student achievement.
2. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived purpose as a motivation factor through (a) passionate commitment to students, parents, and the community and (b) a specific calling.
3. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived a unique connection to their school environment as a motivation factor that influenced their decision to remain in their administrative role because of a (a) personal conviction and (b) desire to support students who experienced an upbringing similar to theirs.
4. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the demanding work requirements to (a) respond to local community challenges and (b) hire and retain appropriate educators as a hygiene factor that decreased job satisfaction.
5. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived the lack of sufficient district engagement to (a) meet district academic expectations and (b) support their role as an administrator as a hygiene factor that decreased job satisfaction.
6. Middle and high school Title I principals perceived district and state politics and policies as a hygiene factor that decreased job satisfaction.

The findings of this study support the peer-reviewed literature and conceptual framework regarding motivation and hygiene factors to influence a principal's decision to remain at a Title I middle or high school. Understanding and providing structures and supports to increase motivation factors and decrease hygiene factors may result in increased retention of Title I middle and high school principals. District and state educational leaders should review the findings of this study to investigate opportunities, strategies, and policy improvements to further mitigate hygiene factors and increase motivation factors that attract and retain high-quality principals to improve retention rates and reduce administrator turnover at Title I middle and high schools.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Interviewee:

Code #:

Interview Outline	Notes
I. Introduction and Greeting Hello. Thank you for meeting with me today. I appreciate you taking time to talk with me and participate in my study. The purpose of this interview is to talk about factors that may influence your decision to remain in your role as a principal at a Title I school. All the interview questions are aligned to the research topic of my study. As a Walden University candidate, I'm excited to begin this interview and gather data for this research. This interview could last about 45–60 minutes and I will record it, so I can transcribe it later.	
II. Review Consent Form Before I begin the interview, I would like to review the consent form.	
III. Study Research Questions Here are the research questions for this study. 1. How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern school district? 2. How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene (extrinsic dissatisfying) factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title	

I school in a southeastern school district? I'm going to ask you to share your perspectives of factors that influence principals' decisions to remain at a Title I middle or high school in this district.	
IV. Background Information Before we start the interview, I would like to learn a little about your background in education and current position. 1. Name: _____ 2. Male: _____ Female: _____ 3. How many total years do you have in education? _____ 4. Are you the principal of a middle or high school? _____ 5. How many years have you served as a principal in this district? _____ 6. How many years have you served as the principal of your current Title I school? _____ 7. How many years have been a principal in a Title I school? _____ 8. Tell me about your educational experiences, background, and what motivated your decision to pursue a career as a principal? Tell me more about… Can you elaborate on…? What did you mean by…?	

9. Thank you for sharing some background information with me about your experience and reasons to become a principal. What questions do you have before we begin?	
V. Interview Questions **Motivation Factors:** How do middle and high school principals perceive motivating factors that influence their decisions to remain at their Title I school in a southeastern school district? 1. What **intrinsic** factors influence your decision to remain as principal at your Title I school? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 2. What **external** factors influence your decision to remain as principal at your Title I school? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 3. What **roles and responsibilities** as a Title I school principal motivate you to remain in your position? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 4. What motivates you most in your role as Title I principal? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…?	

5. How has the global pandemic motivated you to remain in your role as a Title I principal? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? **Hygiene Factors:** How do middle and high school principals perceive hygiene (demotivating/dissatisfying) factors that influence decreased job satisfaction at their Title I school in a southeastern school district? 6. What **intrinsic** factors that may make you feel dissatisfied with your role as a Title I principal? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 7. What **external** factors influence your job dissatisfaction? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 8. What aspects of your **role and responsibilities** decrease your job satisfaction as a Title I principal? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 9. What results in the most dissatisfaction in your role as a Title I principal? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…?	

10. How has the global pandemic decreased job satisfaction as a Title I principal? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…? 11. What additional comments would you like to share regarding factors that would influence your decision to remain at a Title I middle or high school? a. Tell me more about… b. Can you elaborate on… c. What did you mean by…?	
VI. Close of Interview Thank you. I appreciate your participation in this study. Your responses and experiences will contribute to the current educational literature regarding principals' perceptions of factors that influence principals' decisions to remain at a Title I middle or high school. After I finish transcribing, coding, and looking for themes from the interviews, I will provide you with a draft of my findings. I'd really appreciate your input on the findings and if you want to add information, or have questions, please email me so that we can set up a time to discuss the findings. Do you have any questions for me before we stop the recording? Thank you for your time. Goodbye! Stop recording	
VII. End of Interview Interview end time: _____	