2022

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Scholastic Literacy Pro to Monitor and Support Students' Independent Reading

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2008

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Teachers' perceptions were needed about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using Scholastic Literacy Pro (SLP). Teachers have reported concerns about monitoring independent reading productivity with extrinsically based computerized monitoring methods that result in avoidance of reading. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The conceptual framework underpinning the study was Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory. Semistructured interviews were conducted with eight elementary teachers using SLP. Data were manually analyzed using first cycle in vivo coding and second cycle pattern coding. Findings revealed that participants perceived SLP to be beneficial for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading; however, additional training was needed on the program. No participants perceived that students avoided reading or decreased their reading while using SLP. Findings may lead to positive social change with improved teacher practices and student independent reading outcomes.

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Dedication

All glory to God for the completion of this dissertation. Now I must be about my Father's business (Luke 2:49).

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family. Without your loving support, prayers, and encouragement, I would not have been able to persevere. Thank you, Dar, for encouraging me to chase my dream. I love you all! Crossing the finishing line is because of, and for, each one of you!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee for helping to shape this dissertation and seeing it through to completion. Thank you, Dr. Williams, Dr. Andersson, and Dr. Schirmer. It has been quite a journey.

Dr. Robin Sheffield-Lemkin, my friend, colleague, and confidante. It's been said 2 out of 100 would make it…. We are the 2! Thank you for all your support and encouragement along the way!

To my tribe… you know who you are and how much your prayers, encouragement, and support have meant to me. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Dickey for giving me encouragement at a time when I was struggling. Thank you for telling me that I am no longer a consumer; I am now a producer. That made all the difference.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Independent reading is demonstrated to be an essential component of reading achievement (Hebbecker et al., 2019; International Literacy Association [ILA], 2018; National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2019; Stover et al., 2017; Stutz et al., 2016). When reading independently, students practice skills and strategies to become more proficient readers (Fisher & Frey, 2018b; Merga, 2018; Troyer, 2017). Students increase their reading stamina and build vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Brannan et al., 2020; NCTE, 2019; Routman, 2016; Unrau et al., 2018), all important skills of a successful, proficient reader.

One of the critical components of a successful independent reading program is teacher monitoring and support (ILA, 2018). The need for monitoring and support is twofold; teachers must monitor students to provide guidance and feedback on reading progress (Brannan et al., 2020), and federal policy has dictated reading assessments and accountability of pedagogical practices in the classroom (Afflerbach, 2016; Kelly et al., 2019). Brannan et al. (2020) found that teachers valued accountability practices that showed students were actively reading and provided evidence of reading progress. Willson and Falcon (2018) found that teachers continually monitored and analyzed student progress and encouraged students to self-analyze data and reading progress. The findings of both Brannan et al. and Willson and Falcon indicate the value practitioners place on monitoring independent reading.

K. Anderson and Ortlieb (2017) stated that when independent reading implementation fails, it is often due to the lack of teacher guidance or monitoring of

students' choices. Although monitoring students is a necessary practice, educators are often challenged to find methods that benefit both teachers and students. Traditional monitoring methods, such as mandatory paper reading logs, have been found to negatively impact students' independent reading motivation and volume, contradicting their purpose (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017). Brannan et al. (2020) found that teachers monitored by conferring with readers; however, Willson and Falcon's (2018) findings indicated that teachers did not have time to meet with students every day, making conferring an inconsistent method of monitoring and support.

Since the early 1990s, technology has been used to monitor independent reading. Accelerated Reader (AR), the most widely used and researched computerized reading management program, was developed to motivate students to read independently, thereby increasing reading achievement (Siddiqui et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2017). Although AR was found valuable to teachers for monitoring and accountability purposes, drawbacks to the program have been found in the literature (Smith et al., 2017). According to Smith et al. (2017), teachers perceived the comprehension quizzes, a key component used for assessment and accountability purposes, not indicative of students' actual skill levels. Furthermore, AR is based on extrinsic motivators, which resulted in student avoidance of independent reading (Smith et al., 2017), similar to monitoring students with traditional paper reading logs. These findings present challenges for teachers who seek monitoring methods essential to reading accountability, assessment, and proficiency (Brannan et al., 2020; Noortyani, 2018).

Hebbecker et al. (2019) and Stutz et al. (2016) both found classroom practices that increase intrinsic motivation promote conditions that foster student engagement, autonomy, and voluminous reading, thereby positively affecting reading achievement. Allowing students to use technology to set goals, self-regulate to meet goals, and collaborate with others increased engagement (Scott & Meeussen, 2017). Since the introduction of AR, a new technology option has been developed to motivate students intrinsically as opposed to AR's extrinsic motivation focus. The purpose of the current study was exploring the perceptions of elementary school teachers about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using Scholastic Literacy Pro (SLP) in a Southeast U.S. school district. SLP is an online digital independent reading management program that enables teachers to monitor students' independent reading levels, comprehension, and volume, similar to monitoring with AR. In contrast to AR, SLP empowers students with options and choices that encourage intrinsic motivation known to increase engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2017). These choices include allowing students to create their own independent reading goals, track their reading in digital logs embedded in the platform, and rate and recommend books to their peers. SLP also allows students to choose and read e-books within the platform and becomes responsive to student choices by recommending similar texts for students to choose from. Because creating a student-centered technology-enhanced classroom is essential to engagement and self-regulated learning (Scott & Meeussen, 2017), monitoring independent reading with SLP could benefit both teachers and students.

However, as is the case with technology, there is often a gap between practice and research (Guzman et al., 2017). Bull et al. (2016) stated that new emerging technologies must be independently researched to inform instructional practices and improve student outcomes. Kempe (2019) stated that teachers must be viewed as both experts in the classroom and partners in education research. To bridge the gap between research and practice, research must be conducted with teachers related to practices they experience daily in the classroom (Kempe, 2019). Similarly, Tare et al. (2020) stated that research should be developed from teachers' practical problems to improve student outcomes and teaching practice. The current study was conducted to explore how teachers perceive SLP for monitoring and supporting independent reading. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading. Exploring teachers' perceptions of SLP has potential positive social change implications locally with funding decisions, teachers' monitoring practices, and student reading outcomes. Furthermore, this study added to the body of literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices.

Chapter 1 includes the background information pertaining to the study, the problem and purpose statements, and the research question being addressed. The conceptual framework is introduced, as well as design considerations, definitions, and the significance of the study. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary.

Background

Independent reading has been a recommended practice by the U.S. Department of Education (R. C. Anderson et al., 1985). This recommendation was later challenged by

National Reading Report findings and federal legislation that affected teachers' curricular decisions in the classroom (Afflerbach, 2016). The No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, followed by the Reading First initiative that began the same year, required educators to consider evidence-based curricular decisions in reading, holding educators and school districts accountable for closing the achievement gap of identified subgroups (Allington, 2006). With the inception of Common Core State Standards in 2009, many teachers felt compelled to curtail independent reading time to meet rigorous curricular demands and teach test-taking strategies and skills (Afflerbach, 2016; K. Anderson & Ortlieb, 2017; Krashen, 2013). The number of assessments required each year increased in Grades 3–8 due to federal policy that focused on high-stakes testing scores for evidence of reading proficiency instead of assessing whether students could proficiently read independently (Afflerbach, 2016; Krashen, 2013).

Technology integration, a notable paradigm shift in education, led to significant improvements in educational productivity, effectiveness, and performance (Chicioreanu & Ianos, 2019) with new methods to replace traditional pedagogical practices. Technology has evolved with new technologies and opportunities to improve traditional learning and instruction (Bull et al., 2016). Bull et al. (2016) recommended independent studies of new technologies used in the classroom to contribute to the growing body of technology integration literature. SLP is a new technology tool for monitoring and supporting independent reading that could provide a more productive and authentic method of monitoring for both teachers and students.

Monitoring and supporting students' independent reading presented a new challenge to teachers with the COVID-19 virtual teaching environment. According to the publishers' website (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.), SLP provides measurable data to monitor students' reading progress within an application that also offers e-books students can read from any device. The responsiveness of the platform to students' reading choices could be beneficial in classrooms with students struggling with reading choices or teachers who lack knowledge of books students would like to read (Barone & Barone, 2018; Stover et al., 2017). In a virtual environment, it is even more critical for students to feel they are part of a reading community (Hendricks, 2018). SLP could allow students and their classmates, teachers, and parents to partner by monitoring and supporting independent reading in the COVID-19 virtual environment.

Kervin et al. (2019) stated that teachers' perceptions of technology are needed for successful implementation to occur, yet no independent research was found addressing teachers' perceptions of monitoring students' independent reading with SLP at the time of the current study. According to Kempe (2019), one way to close the research-to-practice gap found with new technology is to involve teachers in the research process. In a Southeast U.S. school district, two elementary schools use SLP. Exploring teachers' perceptions of SLP added to the literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices. The current study was needed to explore teachers' perceptions of SLP about monitoring independent reading as a method that may not result in students' avoidance of reading, which extrinsic methods have been found to do (see Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). The gap in practice this study addressed was

teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading.

Problem Statement

Since the early 1990s, teachers have used AR to monitor students' independent reading (Siddiqui et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2017). Although AR was valuable to teachers for monitoring and accountability purposes, concerns regarding the validity of comprehension quizzes and student avoidance of independent reading were reported (Smith et al., 2017). AR was developed with extrinsic motivators to encourage students to read, yet the literature showed extrinsic motivators are contradictory to students' reading volume and achievement (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017). These findings present challenges for teachers seeking monitoring methods essential to accountability, assessment, and proficiency (Brannan et al., 2020; Noortyani, 2018).

SLP was developed to intrinsically motivate students and streamline monitoring methods for teachers in a more authentic, autonomy-supportive manner (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.). Literature pertaining to technology integration in schools showed that using technology tools that allowed students to take an active role in learning improved student outcomes (Asiksoy & Ozdamli, 2017). Asiksoy and Ozdamli (2017) stated that technology integration from a constructivist viewpoint, or technology tools that allow students to actively participate in their learning, should be an area of focus for future research. The current study added to the body of literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices. Teachers' perceptions were needed to know whether SLP provided teachers an independent reading monitoring method that supported

students' independent reading as opposed to other methods known to result in avoidance of students' reading (Fisher et al., 2020: Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. SLP could transform independent reading monitoring methods because it was developed to encourage students' intrinsic motivation to read. However, a thorough literature review revealed little research of teachers' perceptions about SLP for independent reading monitoring and support. The study was conducted using a basic qualitative research design (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of this technology tool being used in the classroom but underresearched in the literature. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading.

Research Question

What are elementary teachers' perceptions about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory (SDT). This theory established the importance of teachers fostering

student intrinsic motivation and the conditions that support it in the classroom. The fundamental premise of SDT is the experience of student autonomy as opposed to being controlled by mandated practices (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Choice, acknowledgement of feelings, and self-direction opportunities enhance intrinsic motivation; conversely, controlling or teacher-centered practices discourage intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Even with theory that established the importance of intrinsic motivation, many schools do not use resources that foster self-autonomy and the intrinsic motivation of students (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to Ryan and Deci, when teachers use traditional teaching methods that do not appeal to the students in their classrooms, motivation and engagement are hampered. Technology tools such as SLP offer teachers autonomy-supportive practices to monitor and support students' independent reading (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.). Today's students prefer using technology to socialize, communicate, and seek information (Riegel & Mete, 2017), all of which are components of SLP. Self-determination theory detailed the importance of finding engaging resources that allow students choice and autonomy in learning, which directly aligned to monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP. Furthermore, SLP provides students an engaging platform to use technology for independent reading, which Mitchell (2016) showed enhances learning. Monitoring and supporting independent reading with SLP could provide teachers an accountability resource for monitoring independent reading that also intrinsically motivates students to read.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This design was chosen because it was an appropriate design to answer the research question generated from the literature review and conceptual framework (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that a basic design should be used if the additional dimension of a particular type of qualitative study does not apply, such as case study, ethnography, or phenomenology. According to Merriam and Tisdell, basic qualitative studies are conducted to understand and interpret data by analyzing patterns and themes found in the data.

I sought to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP. Using a basic qualitative design, I explored and interpreted teachers' perceptions. This study was important because the literature showed that independent reading is an essential component of reading achievement (Hebbecker et al., 2019; ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2019; Stover et al., 2017; Stutz et al., 2016); therefore, monitoring independent reading in a manner that does not result in students' avoidance of independent reading is vital. Understanding how elementary teachers perceive SLP is important for both teacher practices and student outcomes pertaining to independent reading.

Using interviews for data collection is the acceptable and preferred method in a basic qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semistructured interviews were conducted with elementary teachers using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district to explore teachers' perceptions of SLP for monitoring and supporting students'

independent reading. This Southeast U.S. study site was chosen to conduct semistructured interviews with elementary teachers known to use SLP in the classroom. Two elementary buildings at the study site use SLP with a possible participant pool of 60 teachers, as confirmed by district educational technology members and building literacy coaches. The desired number of participants was a minimum of eight, but the sample size would be unknown until saturation was reached during data collection and analysis (see Creswell, 2014). Data were analyzed by first and second cycle coding in an emergent design to answer the research question (see Creswell, 2014).

Definitions

Extrinsic motivation: Behaviors exhibited to obtain an external consequence or reward or to avoid a punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Independent reading: A powerful tool for students to practice strategies learned by daily and consistently reading books with the goal of becoming a proficient reader (Fisher et al., 2020).

Intrinsic motivation: Behaviors exhibited from interesting and/or challenging tasks that involve choice and autonomy instead of control (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that all teachers would report honest and truthful perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP. I assumed that all teachers would respond to the interview questions based on their experiences in the classroom. These assumptions were necessary to answer the research question in this basic qualitative study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to elementary teachers in a Southeast U.S. school district using SLP in the classroom. Elementary teachers not using SLP in the district were not invited to participate. This exclusion was necessary to answer the research question. The participants represented elementary teachers who used SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district.

Understanding teachers' perceptions of SLP for monitoring and supporting independent reading was necessary because teachers were using it in the classroom but there was little research of teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting independent reading with SLP found at the time of this study. Due to the development of SLP to encourage students' intrinsic motivation to read, the technology tool could be useful to teachers for monitoring without resulting in students' avoidance of reading, which extrinsic monitoring methods have been found to do (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017).

The conceptual framework most relevant to the current study was a technology integration theory. Several theories related to technology integration were considered due to SLP being a technology tool used in the classroom. However, these theories were rejected because monitoring students' independent reading with extrinsic motivators was found to cause students to avoid reading, which led me to the lens of a motivational theory. SLP is aligned with Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory by monitoring students' independent reading with a tool that empowers students to choose

their goals, input data, and track progress toward their goals in an appealing technology platform (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.).

Limitations

The data in this study were limited to elementary teachers who used SLP in one Southeast U.S. school district; therefore, results are not transferable to elementary teachers who do not use SLP in the classroom or to other school districts that use SLP. However, providing transparency in all study design aspects increases opportunities for transferability by offering guidance in contexts similar to those found in the current study, including that data were collected from one elementary school in the district (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a literacy coach in the Southeast U.S. school district where the study took place, I had a vested interest in monitoring and supporting students' independent reading. I make curricular and technology decisions for teachers in the school in which I am employed. However, I do not make decisions beyond the scope of my school, and I have no supervisory responsibility beyond my school. To address potential bias, I used member checking and detailed description of data to ensure that experiences and perceptions were not misinterpreted during data collection and analysis (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Significance

Teachers must assess students' independent reading to ensure that students acquire skills needed for reading proficiency (Brannan et al., 2020). However, practitioners are challenged with finding methods to monitor students that do not result in students' avoidance of independent reading (Chang & Renandya, 2017). Hughes et al.

(2017) stated that the researcher's role is to understand how technology used in the classroom affects pedagogy and practices. By investigating teachers' perceptions of SLP, this study added to the body of literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices, thereby possibly improving both teacher practices and student reading outcomes.

Summary

This chapter detailed the problem statement and purpose of the study. The problem addressed in the study was that teachers' perceptions were needed about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading. A thorough literature review of the study's conceptual framework and key concepts is provided in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed in the study was that teachers' perceptions were needed about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. A thorough review of the literature showed that teachers valued monitoring independent reading, yet extrinsically motivating methods of monitoring resulted in students' avoidance of reading (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). Because independent reading is an essential component of reading achievement (Hebbecker et al., 2019; ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2019; Stover et al., 2017; Stutz et al., 2016), teachers must be able to monitor and support students' independent reading with a method that benefits both teacher practices and student outcomes.

This chapter includes a description of the literature search strategies used in the study. I also identify and define the study's conceptual framework. An exhaustive review of the current literature pertaining to independent reading, monitoring and supporting independent reading, the benefits of technology integration, and SLP in the elementary classroom follows, as well as other applicable themes found in the current literature related to the study topic.

Literature Search Strategy

Literature obtained for this study was acquired through the Walden University online library databases and Google Scholar. Specific databases used were Academic Search Complete, EBSCO host, Education Source, ERIC, Research Starters – Education,

SAGE Journals, Taylor and Francis Online, Teacher Reference Center, and Thoreau Multi-Database. Search terms included *independent reading*, *silent reading*, *reading*, *independent reading* and *technology*, *independent reading* and *technology tools*, *independent reading* and *digital tools*, *reading logs*, *digital reading logs*, *reading motivation*, *independent reading motivation*, *self-determination theory* and *independent reading*, *teachers' perceptions* and *independent reading*, *self-autonomy* and *reading*, *autonomy-supportive independent reading*, *independent reading management*, *independent reading management tools*, *independent reading digital management tools*, *digital independent reading management tools*, *technology* and *reading*, *digital natives*, *digital natives* and *technology usage*, *autonomy-supportive practices* and *independent reading*, *independent reading accountability*, *independent reading assessment*, and *technology integration* and *reading*.

Research was focused on peer-reviewed journals with publication dates from 2017 to the present. Due to the nature of this study, research included theorists and publications prior to 2017 to present a clearer context for the present study. These sources prior to 2017 were reviewed and cited to build a transparent line of research. Google Scholar was used to explore citation chain searches in pertinent scholarly articles. An exhaustive search among multiple databases ensured that related themes were researched and explored for applicability to the present study. This search was iterative until saturation was reached by noting that references reviewed were familiar and I had previously read and reviewed them (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underpinning the study was Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT. SDT has many facets, but foundational to the theory is conditions that either foster or diminish intrinsic motivation to learn. Ryan and Deci found that central to learning is the concept that conditions must be meaningful or relevant to students' daily lives, and that teacher practices should support these conditions. Three basic psychological needs must be fulfilled for self-regulated learning to occur: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy is the need to self-direct or pursue one's authentic interests and values. Competence is the basic need to attain mastery and feel effective within the environment, and relatedness is the feeling of belonging or having significance (Ryan & Deci, 2017). All three of these needs must be met to create a classroom environment conducive to learning. According to Ryan and Deci, teachers face many challenges that inhibit autonomy-supportive practices, including mandated curriculum, high-stakes evaluative pressure, and outcome-focused practices detrimental to intrinsic motivation. In contrast, achievement is highest when students' interest and engagement is fostered; autonomy-supportive teacher practices lead to higher achievement and student outcomes in all curricular areas (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

When faced with the challenges identified by Ryan and Deci (2017), many teachers adopt controlling practices necessary for accountability, resulting in adverse effects on student motivation. Mandated reading logs is a practice that many teachers use for monitoring students' independent reading, yet there is evidence that this method has negatively impacted independent reading motivation and volume (Fisher et al., 2020;

Raney, 2017). Using methods to monitor independent reading that also encourage students' intrinsic motivation to read would be beneficial to both teacher practices and student outcomes. To understand the foundational merit of SDT and independent reading, a thorough review of SDT in the literature follows.

SDT was first used in reading research after Ryan and Deci's original 1985 publication that described the theory. Sweet et al. (1998) conducted a thorough review of theoretical perspectives and motivational research in search of a framework for their study and found research that linked intrinsic motivation with student achievement. The review showed a correlation between teacher perceptions of motivation, student engagement, and self-determination, leading them to use SDT as the framework for their study. Sweet et al. explored teachers' perceptions to understand the motivation of students for independent reading. Findings concurred with prior research Sweet et al. had reviewed and increased understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of self-determination and intrinsic motivation in student achievement. The study showed that teachers perceived high-achieving students as being self-regulated and intrinsically motivated. Lower achieving students were perceived to be less self-regulated and provided with fewer choices in reading and writing. Sweet et al. stated that more research should be conducted on teachers' perceptions of motivation to support all students in obtaining intrinsic motivation or self-regulation in reading.

In 2001, Guthrie and Cox conducted research using SDT as the framework for motivation to include the effect of independent reading motivation on student achievement. The study's findings concurred with prior studies that intrinsic motivation

components contributed to reading volume, which increased student achievement. Wang and Guthrie (2004) explored the effects of motivation on reading for pleasure and reading in school to ascertain the correlation with reading volume. With participants from U.S. schools and Chinese schools, Wang and Guthrie also explored the effects of culture on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The findings indicated that culture did not determine differences in motivation for the students, and consistent with previous findings, intrinsic motivation increased the volume of reading for pleasure in the participants. This foundational research exemplified the need for teacher practices that foster students' intrinsic motivation to read when monitoring and supporting students' independent reading.

Along with increased volume and achievement in reading, the components of SDT explain technology use's effectiveness with students (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Today's students, labeled digital natives, have been raised in the digital age (Riegel & Mete, 2017). Characteristics of digital natives include proficiency with technology and being very media-oriented, intuitive thinkers who multitask and task-switch quickly and easily, preferring online social collaboration (Riegel & Mete, 2017). Teaching digital natives requires a student-centered approach (Merga, 2017), and incorporating technology that gives students choices in goals, avatars, feedback, and interactions with peers encourages autonomy, relatedness, and competence in the educational setting, which Ryan and Deci (2017) addressed. SLP offers students opportunities to foster intrinsic motivation through choice, goal setting, and collaboration within a technology platform students feel competent using, in contrast to monitoring practices that have been found unmotivating

to students (Fisher et al., 2020: Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). Prior research has shown that intrinsic motivation is a factor in both independent reading (Wang & Guthrie, 2004) and technology use (Ryan & Deci, 2017). However, Ryan and Deci stated that many schools do not use resources that foster intrinsic motivation of students. According to Ryan and Deci, when teachers use teaching methods that do not appeal to the digital natives in their classrooms, motivation and engagement are hampered, as is the case with monitoring students' independent reading with an extrinsically motivating method (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017).

In a meta-analysis of studies conducted by Lasowski and Hulleman (2016), an effect size of .70 was found on performance outcomes when an external agent intended to motivate students using SDT was introduced. Lasowski and Hulleman found that conditions that optimized an autonomy-supportive environment were more motivating than a controlling environment using externally motivating conditions. These findings concur with the evidence that mandated reading logs deter independent reading motivation and volume (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017). SLP may provide teachers with an alternative instructional method to monitor and support independent reading, which also improves student outcomes due to the intrinsic development of the tool.

Digital natives prefer using technology to socialize, communicate, and seek information (Riegel & Mete, 2017). Self-determination theory detailed the importance of using engaging resources that allow students choice and autonomy in learning, which is how SLP is marketed. However, little research had been conducted regarding teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP. The

gap in practice addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading. SDT underpinned the current study that addressed teachers' perceptions of an intrinsically developed method for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

Independent Reading and Reading Achievement

Independent reading is an essential component of reading achievement (Brannan & Giles, 2017; Hebbecker et al., 2019; ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2019; Stover et al., 2017; Stutz et al., 2016). Skills and strategies that students practice while reading result in more proficient readers (Fisher & Frey, 2018b; Merga, 2018; Troyer, 2017). Students increase reading stamina and build vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Brannan et al., 2020; NCTE, 2019; Routman, 2016; Unrau et al., 2018), all important skills of a successful, proficient reader.

Nevertheless, the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (n.d.) Reading Assessment for fourth-grade students showed that only 35% of U.S. students scored at or above the proficiency level. Because the amount of time students spend independently reading is positively correlated with reading achievement, consistently building independent reading into the daily schedule is a priority in the classroom (Fisher et al., 2020; Hudson & Williams, 2015; Merga, 2018). Routman (2016) agreed with scholars stating that sustained, self-selected, uninterrupted reading is necessary for reading achievement. The pertinence of independent reading in reading achievement

necessitates providing classroom conditions conducive to independent reading to improve student outcomes.

Classroom Conditions Conducive to Independent Reading

Independent reading has many variations in the classroom depending on the teacher's beliefs, involvement, and modeling (Merga, 2018; Sanden, 2012). Sanden (2012) found that highly effective teachers' reading instructional practices involved offering book choices, modeling behaviors, supporting and scaffolding readers, requiring accountability for reading, and providing an environment that encouraged social behaviors. More recently, Merga (2018), building on Sanden's findings, conducted a qualitative study of Australian students age 8–11 and found that classrooms where reading involved social interaction with peers and intervention by the teacher produced students more engaged in reading. Similarly, Hebbecker et al. (2019) and Stutz et al. (2016) found classroom practices that increased intrinsic motivation fostered engagement, autonomy, and voluminous reading, positively affecting reading outcomes.

Another method conducive to engaged reading and mastery of skills such as stamina, fluency, and comprehension was teachers assuming a coaching role in the classroom (Flowers, 2017). By assuming this role, teachers cultivated students' intrinsic motivation and the opportunity for students to be self-directed and self-regulated (Scott & Meeussen, 2017; Springer et al., 2017). This shift from teacher centeredness to student centeredness promoted students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, increasing their intrinsic motivation to read (Merga, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In a meta-analysis of reading interventions' impact on students' reading self-efficacy, Unrau et al. (2018) found a causal relationship between motivation and students' reading outcomes. Unrau et al. found that classroom conditions that fostered students' self-efficacy in reading led to higher engagement and reading achievement. Similarly, Sailors and Kaambankadzanja (2017) found that when teachers nurtured intrinsic motivation by providing support for autonomy and structure, especially when reading practices encouraged students' self-regulated learning, reading engagement and achievement increased. Practitioners have also found that by prioritizing reading with activities such as book trailers and discussions, student independent reading interest and volume improved (Dawkins & Whitehouse, 2017). Furthermore, Brannan and Giles (2017) found that teachers valued both the quantity and quality of students' independent reading. In addition to monitoring quantity, teachers scaffolded students by assisting them with finding books, conferring about books, and assigning students individualized reading response activities. The student-centered environment teachers created in their classrooms resulted in motivated students who read avidly. Brannan and Giles found that teachers believed engaged reading and volume of reading both led to increased reading achievement. Teachers in the study felt that providing a reading environment conducive to self-regulation in which students set their own goals and chose their own books contributed to successful independent reading implementation.

Another component necessary for a successful independent reading program was consistently providing time to read. A Scholastic (2015) survey found that only 33% of students age 6–17 reported a designated time for reading during the day at school, and

only 17% reported consistent independent reading time every day. In addition to this, 60% of lower income students (below $35,000 annually) reported that reading for fun mainly occurs at school (Gambrell, 2015). These statistics emphasized the necessity of consistent independent reading during school to improve student reading outcomes. Furthermore, a consistent daily structure allowed students to apply literacy skills, including responding to texts and making connections among texts and with peers (Hudson & Williams, 2015). Consistent independent reading also allowed students to practice skills learned from explicit teaching (Fisher et al., 2020). By adopting best practices and providing an environment that embraced independent reading, teachers provided students with the parameters for becoming motivated and proficient readers (Badrigian, 2017; Merga, 2018).

Monitoring Independent Reading With Traditional Methods

Providing time and fostering an independent reading life is conducive to successful independent reading implementation; yet teachers must monitor students' independent reading to ensure successful implementation has occurred (Brannan & Giles, 2017). Monitoring students and providing support by the teacher is one of the most critical components of a successful independent reading program (ILA, 2018). The need for monitoring and support is twofold; teachers must monitor students to provide guidance and feedback on reading progress (Brannan et al., 2020), and teachers must comply with federal policy that has dictated reading assessments and accountability of pedagogical practices in the classroom (Afflerbach, 2016; Kelly et al., 2019). Brannan et al. (2020) found that teachers valued accountability practices that showed evidence of

students' actual reading and reading progress. Willson and Falcon (2018) found that teachers continually monitored and analyzed student progress while encouraging students to analyze their data and reading progress. Both studies indicate the value practitioners place on monitoring students' independent reading and reading progress.

In today's high stakes testing environment, teachers face accountability for all instructional decisions (Krashen, 2013; Merga, 2018; Raney, 2017). With the inception of Common Core State Standards in 2009, many teachers felt compelled to curtail independent reading time to meet rigorous curricular demands and teach test-taking strategies and skills (Afflerbach, 2016; K. Anderson & Ortlieb, 2017; Krashen, 2013). The number of assessments required each year increased in Grades 3–8 with federal policy focused on high stakes testing scores for evidence of reading proficiency (Afflerbach, 2016; Krashen, 2013). The shift in reading assessments from the goal of developing independent proficient readers to students that performed well on high-stakes testing had adverse effects on reading assessment efforts of practitioners in the classroom (Afflerbach, 2016). As high-stakes testing became the focus, teachers abandoned independent reading to focus their time on skills and strategies (Afflerbach, 2016; Brannan & Giles, 2017). Those who implemented independent reading were challenged to find effective methods to monitor students for accountability in classrooms where teachers used traditional data management methods (Raney, 2017).

Mandatory paper reading logs have been an established method used by teachers to track and manage independent reading for many years. Yet in a study conducted with second and third-grade participants, students assigned mandatory paper reading logs

experienced decreased independent reading interest (Pak & Weseley, 2012). Pak and Weseley concluded that mandatory reading logs were ineffective and could decrease reading motivation, necessitating further studies exploring more autonomous student options to monitor independent reading. Filetti (2016) found that in classrooms where teachers assigned reading logs, students reported finding them only "somewhat helpful" (p. 157). Filetti concluded that there was a gap in practice of finding resources that students deemed helpful in managing their reading lives. Despite these findings, the literature review showed scholars continued to promote traditional methods of managing independent reading including assigning books, requiring students to complete charts or logs, and assigning points for books completed (Lipp, 2018).

Challenges Deleterious to Independent Reading

Scholarly research has shown that teacher choices sometimes inhibited the independent reading environment in the classroom, which deterred student reading volume and impacted reading proficiency. One classroom practice that decreased student interest and engagement was controlling or restricting choices (Raney, 2017; Routman, 2016). Many teachers limited students to genres, often restricting high-interest texts such as graphic novels, comic books, or online texts (Routman, 2016). Attempting to control student choices diminished intrinsic motivation to read (Ryan & Deci, 2017), making independent reading less enjoyable for both teacher and student. Scholars and practitioners agreed that allowing students to choose their books was a significant factor in student motivation for independent reading (Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Routman, 2016; Sanden, 2012; Wang & Guthrie, 2004).

Another teacher practice that affected reading volume was when the classroom motivators were extrinsically based, such as grades, stickers, or teacher approval (Bodensteiner & Kindle, 2015). Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory posits that intrinsic motivation is fostered by choice, social connectedness, and self-regulation; not the extrinsic motivators adopted in many classrooms. As teachers decreased time in the classroom for independent reading due to high stakes testing, more extrinsic motivators were put in place for reading at home (Bodensteiner & Kindle, 2015). Implementing reading logs for at home reading worked directly against fostering intrinsic motivation to read and negatively affected reading volume (Raney, 2017).

The number one barrier teachers faced was not having enough time for independent reading with the curricular goals mandated to teachers (ILA, 2020). In a survey published by the ILA (2020), 91% of teachers surveyed responded that time should be set aside for daily independent reading, yet only 33% of those teachers reported consistently dedicating twenty or more minutes per day to the task. Scheduling was a pertinent issue teachers faced when deciding whether to allocate time to independent reading or use it for other curricular demands (Bodensteiner & Kindle, 2015). Many stakeholders viewed time allocated to independent reading as time better spent on high stakes testing preparation (Bodensteiner & Kindle, 2015). Yet, when independent reading was excluded from the school day, students began to perceive reading as an exercise to gain information at school and missed the benefits of becoming immersed in books for pleasure (Bodensteiner & Kindle, 2015). Sporadic reading opportunities while teachers took attendance, checked email, or completed paperwork often provided an opportunity

for students to “fake read,” further compounding teacher challenges (Raney, 2017). Many of these challenges were addressed with the inception of technology; significant improvements in educational productivity, effectiveness, and performance have provided new methods for monitoring independent reading to replace traditional pedagogical practices (Chicioreanu & Ianos, 2019).

Benefits of Technology Integration

Today’s students have grown up in the technology era and prefer using technology over traditional paper and pen practices (Neokleous, 2019; Polka et al., 2014; Riegel & Mete, 2017; Wulan, 2019). Technology has continued to evolve with new technologies and new opportunities to improve traditional learning and instruction (Bull et al., 2016). Bull et al. (2016) recommended independent studies of new technologies used in the classroom to contribute to the growing body of technology integration literature. It is vital to research practices occurring in technology enhanced classrooms to improve instructional strategies and student outcomes (Scott & Meeussen, 2017).

The term digital natives is attributed to students who have grown up with and used technology with automaticity (Polka et al., 2014; Riegel & Mete, 2017). These students have been found to use technology by multitasking and accessing multiple modalities with ease (Riegel & Mete, 2017). According to Riegel and Mete (2017), digital natives preferred quick, digital means for communicating and social networking instead of face to face interactions. Digital natives in the classroom preferred to use technology in educational ways and could help non-digital native teachers navigate technology resources (Riegel & Mete, 2017). Teaching digital natives required a student-

centered focus instead of a traditional, teacher-centered approach (Wulan, 2019). In a study conducted in Norway, 14 students were interviewed for their perceptions of the benefits of technology use in the classroom (Neokleous, 2019). Neokleous (2019) found that students preferred active engagement in the learning process that technology provided instead of a "traditional teacher fronted classroom" (p. 122). Using technology has provided teachers with tools to support teaching and learning and prepare students for 21st Century skills and careers (Harrell & Bynum, 2018). Harrell and Bynum (2018) concluded that schools are responsible for integrating technology and leaving more traditional education models behind to prepare digital natives in the classroom for future college and career readiness.

Facilitating digital resources has allowed teachers to maintain a coaching role in the independent reading framework, found to be autonomy-supportive in the literature. According to Scott and Meeussen (2017), opportunities for students to set their own goals and take responsibility for their learning included permitting students to use digital resources. Technology that digital natives preferred and felt competent using allowed students to control their learning (Neokleous, 2019). Neokleous (2019) found that fostering a setting where digital natives felt competent and able to use technology tools for a clearly defined purpose increased motivation. Students blend their physical and digital lives, and scholars have encouraged practitioners to embrace these changes in the classroom (Cassidy et al., 2019). Practitioners must understand that today's students think and process differently because they have grown up in the world of technology (McVicker, 2019). Digital natives do not require step-by-step traditional teaching

methods and preferred a student-centered environment where they could choose to use digital resources (McVicker, 2019). The preference of technology use by digital natives was also emphasized by the amount of screen time students logged.

A review of screen time in the literature has shown the allure and engagement technology has offered digital natives. According to Rideout (2016), media screen time included television, listening to music, gaming, social media networking, web-browsing, reading, and watching movies. The average American student aged 8–18 spent approximately 50 hours per week watching screens outside of school (Gentile et al., 2017). Less than 30 minutes per day of screen time (3.5 hours per week) was attributed to reading (Rideout, 2016), and reading screen time consisted of searching for and locating information in an online environment (Leu & Maykel, 2016). It was increasingly difficult to quantify the amount of time students spent on screens due to the multiple modalities and devices they had access to (Rideout, 2016). Gentile et al. (2017) found that media accessibility that resulted in less time spent reading negatively affected school performance. Understanding the motivating features of technology and monitoring what students are reading is necessary for practitioners to positively affect reading volume.

The accessibility to books and texts has fundamentally changed with the inception of technology and mobile devices. Multiple modalities no longer restrict students to one book carried to and from school; books are accessed from various sources and devices. Devices have made reading more portable and more enjoyable for the reader due to the number of books available on devices (Sehn & Fragoso, 2015). There are many device choices for digital reading; the most predominant are smartphones, Kindles, Nooks,

iPads, and laptops (Shimray et al., 2015). During the 2010s, e-reading on devices became popular as devices were more integrated with daily life (Sehn & Fragoso, 2015; Shimray et al., 2015). In a study conducted by Mitchell (2016), findings indicated that students valued independent reading time during school and found reading at home difficult. Students were positively motivated by the digital reader's technology tools and reported reading more. Students also reported discussing more books and recommending books to their friends and families while using Nooks to read (Mitchell, 2016). Mitchell concluded that students' reading behaviors were positively influenced through wide access to text, the autonomy of choice in reading material, and the use of technology. Mitchell stated that research involving technology and reading was limited with many gaps in the literature and exploring ways to combine reading and technology was vital to equip 21st-century learners with viable and necessary skills.

Jacobson (2017) discussed the necessity to use digital resources such as QR codes, book trailers, and Google Slides to fuel interest and create positive reading communities. Using current research, incorporating digital resources, and creating a collaborative environment led to effective independent reading classroom management and practices (Jacobson, 2017). Similarly, Springer et al. (2017) found that fostering intrinsic motivation and autonomy required accessing technology and digital resources familiar to students. These motivating benefits have been considered when using technology resources to monitor and support independent reading.

Monitoring Methods Utilizing Technology Resources

The term digital reading log is ambiguous and scant in reading research but was an early attempt to combine reading accountability with technology. In a study conducted by Nash-Ditzel and Brown (2012), a digital reading log was attributed to a Word document that students cut and pasted an internet article into, added comments and thoughts to, and emailed back to a classmate. The classmate then read the comments and responded, returning the article to the original student. The study's findings indicated that increased student engagement had a powerful effect on the literacy growth of high school participants (Nash-Ditzel & Brown, 2012). Although that type of digital reading log is still available to teachers, teachers have better technology tools and options to monitor the independent reading of students.

AR, one of the most prevalent monitoring programs found in the literature, was created as an independent reading management program to increase students' reading motivation and achievement (Smith et al., 2017). A thorough review of the computerized independent reading monitoring program in the literature produced many studies with conflicting results ranging from the late 1990s to present.

Renaissance Learning Company was originally titled Advantage Learning Systems (Bigger, 2001). The company created a computerized reading management program that included a cloze reading assessment to find students' approximate reading levels (Bigger, 2001). At that time, schools purchased CD-ROMs of comprehension quizzes that matched book titles available for students to read (Bigger, 2001). In Bigger's (2001) publication, he stated that extrinsic motivation, the focus of the program,

discouraged reading engagement and volume. A few years later, Grenawalt (2004) added to the literature and discussed the pros and cons of AR. Grenawalt stated that AR was an effective accountability and monitoring tool yet discussed studies that showed no significant findings that AR improved motivation or achievement of students. During the early 2000s, studies continued to show contradictory findings, and many literacy leaders criticized the program for assessing in a manner that was not an authentic assessment of students' reading ability (Balajthy, 2007). Balajthy (2007) concluded that AR was effective for monitoring independent reading and left teachers more time for "other aspects of teaching," (p. 244) yet concurred with publications that discussed both positive and negative findings of students' motivation and achievement.

Foster and Foster (2014) conducted a study to analyze how many AR points students needed to achieve one year's growth on the STAR reading assessment, Renaissance Learning's cloze assessment for reading progress. The data indicated that students read approximately 160 hours, or 20 points worth on AR quizzes, to achieve one year's growth. Foster and Foster found that 0.2 year's growth was directly attributed to reading AR books and using the program, agreeing with studies demonstrating that more time spent reading correlates with higher reading achievement. Furthermore, results indicated that consistent monitoring of students' independent reading was an integral component to the reading growth of students.

Presently, AR is accessed by annual subscription, and comprehension quizzes are available online from the Renaissance Learning Inc. website (Siddiqui et al., 2016). There are six key steps involved in the implementation process: the STAR reading assessment,

teacher monitoring, book selection based on levels, independent reading by students, and comprehension quizzes after reading (Siddiqui et al., 2016). Siddiqui et al. (2016) found that AR was implemented in the U.K. with little intervention or training from the developer, making it an easily accessible program for monitoring reading. Students participated in 40-minute AR "sessions" during French or English classes or after school during the study. Sessions consisted of attending the school library to read AR book titles and take AR quizzes (Siddiqui et al., 2016). Siddiqui et al. found that students receiving the AR intervention scored higher on the literacy post-test than control groups after reading a minimum of 40 minutes per day, with a 0.24 effect size (Hedges' g), or small effect. This study further compounded literacy leaders' concerns regarding authentic assessment of students' abilities, particularly since participants in this study received AR as an intervention while missing class time or after school. Another concern with an extrinsically motivating method for monitoring independent reading is that stakeholders may view extrinsic rewards more important than the intrinsic motivation for reading (Fisher & Frey, 2018a).

See and Gorard (2020) conducted a critical review of instructional practices related to primary literacy and included AR in their review. See and Gorard's findings indicated contradiction among decades of studies reviewed. In a review citing studies from 1999 to date, the See and Gorard concluded that AR had many benefits yet only two studies met a "medium quality rigor" for review; one study that found no significant impact on reading from AR and one study included in this literature review. See and Gorard cautioned that utilizing and researching programs that failed to show benefits with

rigorous testing only inhibits finding better approaches to approve literacy outcomes. One approach that has received little to no attention in the literature is monitoring independent reading with SLP, created to increase intrinsic motivation instead of the extrinsic motivators within the AR program.

SLP allows students to set goals, track or "log" independent reading books, share book recommendations, and view online real-time virtual bookshelves from any web-based browser or application (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.). Rating and reviewing books empowered students to share their opinions authentically (Kelly, 2017; Turner, 2017). Recommending books to friends and reading classmates' recommendations introduced students to books they may not have chosen for themselves (Atkinson, 2015). Atkinson found that even struggling readers in the classroom were more likely to choose books recommended by friends, an essential feature of SLP. SLP allows students to input the data and read suggested e-books within the digital platform, as well as the books recommended by peers. As Forzani and Leu (2017) have observed, technology added an element to reading that continually evolves and changes; teachers must evaluate and adapt practices to meet these innovations for the students in their classrooms.

SLP, developed since the inception of AR, has focused on motivating students intrinsically. The company cites reading motivation theorists and research as the founding principles in the development of SLP and promotes the platform as an intrinsic motivator for independent reading (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.). SLP enables teachers to monitor students' independent reading levels, comprehension, and reading volume; similar monitoring methods to AR (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.). Contrary to AR, students

create their own independent reading goals, track their reading in digital logs embedded in the platform, and rate and recommend books to their peers; all choices that foster intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The student-centered nature of data input the platform offers has other benefits, as well. Since students enter their data, teachers could have more time to meet each reader's individual needs in the classroom which is beneficial since teachers have been challenged to find time for independent reading implementation (ILA, 2020). SLP could streamline students' monitoring in a more authentic, autonomy-supportive manner than teacher-directed mandated reading logs, which negatively impacted students' reading volume and motivation (Fisher et al., 2020; Pak & Weseley, 2012; Raney, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

Scholars and practitioners agreed that students need to read independently and that lack of reading volume affects reading proficiency (Allington, 2014; Fisher & Frey, 2018b; Merga, 2018; Routman, 2016; Troyer, 2017). In today's high stakes testing environment, monitoring independent reading is a necessary practice (ILA, 2018). Many factors influence students' independent reading, such as providing students with book choices, providing a collaborative environment, and using digital resources that students feel competent using (Jacobson, 2017; Sanden, 2012; Scott & Meeussen, 2017). The literature showed ample research regarding practices that support students' independent reading and increased students' independent reading volume. Yet, there is little research in the literature of methods to monitor independent reading that also benefit students' independent reading volume.

Today's students, labeled digital natives in the literature, were raised with technology and access it with ease (Riegel & Mete, 2017). We know from the literature that traditional methods to monitor independent reading, such as mandating students to complete charts or logs and assigning books with point values, resulted in avoidance of reading (Filetti, 2016; Fisher et al., 2020; Pak & Weseley, 2012; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017; Wulan, 2019). Filetti (2016) found that combining independent reading with technology resources was a more student-centered option for teachers to monitor and support students' reading; monitoring with SLP could be another student-centered option for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading.

In this section I provided research that discussed various ways of combining technology with independent reading, yet a gap in practice exploring teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading was found. This gap in practice contributes to the challenge of finding tools to monitor students' independent reading that do not result in avoidance of students' independent reading (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). Exploring elementary teachers' perceptions about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP could lead to a better understanding of this technology tool developed to also increase intrinsic motivation to read (Scholastic Literacy Pro, n.d.). The qualitative methodology chosen to explore the study's research question follows in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading. This gap in practice contributed to the challenge of finding tools to monitor students' independent reading that did not result in avoidance of students' independent reading (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). By investigating teachers' perceptions of SLP, this study added to the body of literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices, thereby possibly improving both teacher practices and student outcomes.

According to Kempe (2019), research needs to be conducted with teachers regarding the practices and challenges found in the classroom. Practitioners have reported concerns about monitoring independent reading due to time constraints and accountability measures (Brannan & Giles, 2017; Filetti, 2016). Many methods of monitoring independent reading, both traditional and with technology, are based on extrinsic motivation theories and negatively impacted independent reading motivation and volume (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). SLP was developed to increase intrinsic motivation by allowing students to create and track their own goals within a social, collaborative reading environment. However, little research was found of elementary teachers' perceptions about this technology tool being used in the classroom. In the current study, I interviewed elementary teachers who use SLP to understand their

perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP to add to the literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices.

A concise summary of the current and historical literature pertaining to independent reading, monitoring independent reading, and using technology with independent reading was provided in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, and methodology chosen for the study. Participant selection, instrumentation, the data collection and analysis plan, and trustworthiness are also discussed. Finally, ethical procedure considerations for the current study are presented, and a summary concludes the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

This basic qualitative study was conducted to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP. The participant pool was limited to elementary teachers known to use SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The research question that guided this study was informed by the SDT conceptual framework and my review of current literature regarding independent reading monitoring pedagogy and practices. SDT underpinned the study because SDT describes the environment and practices needed to support the intrinsic motivation of students (see Ryan & Deci, 2017). SLP is a tool developed to increase students' intrinsic motivation to independently read while providing teachers with a tool to monitor and support students' independent reading. The research question that guided the study was the following: What are elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district?

The research design chosen to explore the gap in practice was a basic qualitative study, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). This design was appropriate for the study because a basic qualitative design is used to understand how participants interpret or make meaning of their experiences without the added dimension that other types of qualitative studies encompass (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For example, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study are qualitative designs with an additional dimension such as understanding cultural beliefs of individuals, understanding a phenomenon, or understanding a certain case or bounded system; therefore, those qualitative design dimensions were rejected (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative design was appropriate because teachers' perceptions were being explored through semistructured interviews with detailed descriptions and no other type of qualitative data (see Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). A basic design allowed for one source of data to be collected without the need for triangulation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A quantitative approach was not chosen for the present study because the research question addressed perceptions of teachers, not quantifiable data. Furthermore, a thorough literature review revealed that little research had been conducted regarding elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP, making the quantitative approach inappropriate for the current study.

Role of the Researcher

In this basic qualitative study, I assumed the role of the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this role, I participated in data collection but did not take an active role with participants in the classroom

environment (see Burkholder et al., 2016). The benefit of this role was that I actively participated during data collection to explore teachers' perceptions but was not involved as a participant or an observer in the classroom setting, which could have influenced teachers' perceptions. This consideration was necessary because I am currently employed as an elementary literacy coach in the Southeast U.S. school district under study, where participants are employed as elementary teachers. I do not have a supervisory position in the district and have not led teachers' professional development in the two elementary buildings where participants were employed. I had no professional relationship with participants, and no participants with whom I had had previous contact were invited to participate. Furthermore, I did not know teachers in the district who work in other schools because it is a large district and I had been employed in this district for only 5 years.

Researcher bias was managed in multiple ways. My influence was limited to collecting and interpreting data and not by entering the classroom as a participant. Teachers in the elementary building where I am employed as a literacy coach were not invited to participate in the study. Bias was managed by using open-ended questions with probes that did not lead participant responses. Data collection protocols remained explicit and transparent through the data collection process to establish credibility. Furthermore, member checking was used to ensure trustworthiness (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking refers to eliciting feedback from participants to ensure that findings concur with the participants' perceptions (Burkholder et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These methods and considerations ensured that bias was managed and findings were accurately reported.

Methodology

The study population was eight elementary teachers who use SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The study site has a diverse student population with respect to race and economic status, including 67% White, 18% Black, 11% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% mixed race. There are over 22,000 students district-wide, with an average poverty rate of 58.3%. Recent state testing data showed that 52.2% of elementary students in the district lacked reading proficiency.

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling to recruit participants who were elementary teachers who used SLP in the Southeast U.S. school district under study. District educational technology team members and literacy coaches confirmed that elementary teachers in two buildings use SLP at the study site. This sample was purposefully chosen because these elementary teachers would have perceptions of SLP as a monitoring method for independent reading in the classroom, addressing the gap in practice being explored in the study. Two elementary buildings at the study site had teachers using SLP with a possible population of 52 teachers, as confirmed by literacy coaches in those buildings. After I obtained Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Number 11-09-21-0052697), district superintendent approval, and principals' consent (see Appendix A), the district listserv of possible participants' email addresses were verified and confirmed by literacy coaches and principals in those buildings. Once verified, emails were sent to the 52 prospective participants through district email. Prospective participants were introduced to the study and asked to respond to my Walden email (see

Appendix B) if interested in participating. Additional letters were sent to the 52 prospective participants to elicit their interest in participating.

I began contacting interested participants who responded to my Walden email within 1 week. Participants were contacted in the order they responded to my Walden email. I informed them of the study, obtained their permission, and scheduled an interview at an agreed upon time via the Zoom platform. Eight participants volunteered for the study. Saturation was reached when new data collected failed to provide new information or insights (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is an emergent design; therefore, the final number of participants chosen remained unknown until I began the data collection and analysis process and determined that saturation had been reached (see Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

In this basic qualitative study, I assumed the role of the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semistructured interviews were conducted with participants using an interview protocol I created (see Appendix C). The protocol consisted of open-ended questions created to address the research question and based on the literature review and conceptual framework. Using the interview protocol ensured the same questions were being asked of each participant. Open-ended questions allowed me to explore participants' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP and obtain detailed descriptive data (see Creswell, 2014). The interview process is the most common form of data collection in

qualitative studies, and in the present study was the only type of data collected (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After I obtained IRB approval, district superintendent approval, and principals' consent (see Appendix A), the district listserv of possible participants' email addresses was verified and confirmed by literacy coaches in those buildings. Once verified, emails were sent to the 52 possible participants through district email. Prospective participants were introduced to the study (see Appendix B) and asked to respond to my Walden email with interest in participating.

I began contacting interested participants who responded to my Walden email within 1 week. Prospective participants were contacted in the order they responded to my Walden email. Participants were informed that data collection would occur via semistructured interviews conducted in the Zoom platform at an agreed upon time. Participants were contacted in the order they responded to schedule their interviews and to provide details of the study to obtain informed consent. The Zoom platform was chosen as the venue for data collection because participants in the district had access to it during the COVID-19 pandemic and were comfortable using it (see Salmons, 2020). Interviews were conducted during the 2021–2022 school year and lasted no longer than 60 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded on a digital voice recorder used solely for data collection and uploaded to a MacBook pro. I created a Zoom account used solely for data collection. Interviews were conducted at a time agreed upon with the participant, and all information was kept confidential by ensuring that data were seen and analyzed only

by me. Participants were also told about member checking and then exited the study after member checking occurred via email to confirm that data were interpreted according to teachers' actual perceptions (see Burkholder et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

Transparency in data analysis establishes rigor and validity; therefore, the data analysis plan was intentional and transparent (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this qualitative study, data were collected via semistructured interviews and were the only data collection method for the research question being addressed. Data obtained and recorded via digital voice recorder were uploaded by NVivo transcription on a MacBook used solely by me, and I manually checked all transcriptions to ensure participants words were transcribed correctly. I used first cycle in vivo and second cycle pattern coding methods (see Saldana, 2016) to manually code and analyze each transcript using the NVivo software platform. The NVivo software platform allowed me to organize data by topic and identify patterns to uncover trends and emerging themes. Saldana (2016) recommended first cycle in vivo coding for new researchers and second cycle pattern coding to condense information into smaller units for analysis. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), data that are discrepant or divergent from other data must be noted in qualitative analysis. Throughout the analysis, discrepant cases were considered to determine the weaknesses or strengths of the divergent patterns and themes (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Through analysis of divergent data, the overall confidence in the findings was improved and discrepant cases were considered and explored before saturation was reached. Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative data analysis is both

inductive and deductive. Data must be analyzed from a wide stance to develop patterns, categories, and themes inductively and then considered deductively to determine whether there is enough evidence to support the themes or if more data must be gathered (Creswell, 2014).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is often referred to as validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Both terms refer to studies conducted with rigor to ensure participants' experiences and perceptions are accurately reported (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), trustworthiness is accomplished by careful design of all aspects of the study and using standards that are developed and accepted by the scientific community. To establish trustworthiness, qualitative researchers must consider credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) in the study's design.

Credibility in qualitative research ensures that the research design, instruments, and data are aligned, and findings are accurately presented (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In the current study, I ensured alignment of the problem, purpose, conceptual framework, gap, research question, and design of a basic qualitative study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another method used to establish credibility is member checking, which I used in the study to confirm that teachers' perceptions were accurately interpreted. Because the only source of data collection in this basic qualitative study was semistructured interviews, member checking ensured participants' words and perceptions were accurately recorded and analyzed to ensure trustworthiness (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Alignment and

member checking both contributed to the credibility of the study, thereby increasing trustworthiness.

Transferability in qualitative study does not ensure generalizability but rather the notion that a study can be applied to or compared with other settings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), providing detailed descriptions of the study and context leaves the extent to which the findings apply to other situations up to the reader. Detailed description, or thick description, refers to highly descriptive details about the setting and findings (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). To increase transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of teachers' perceptions of SLP, including quotations as needed.

Transferability was addressed in the current study by proposing to obtain data from participants in both elementary building locations within the district which would add variation to the sampling. The two elementary building sites were purposefully chosen because teachers utilizing SLP were approximately 30 miles apart with different demographics in teacher experience, minority students, and reading proficiency. These considerations increased the likeliness that a variety of perceptions would enable more readers to apply the findings to other settings and contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, as described in Chapter 4, variability in the two school sites did not occur because all participants that volunteered were from one school site. Variability in sampling was achieved by a variance in grade levels within the school site represented from kindergarten to grade 4.

Dependability in qualitative studies refers to the assurance that data collection is consistent with the research design and answers the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that both reliability and dependability are the extent to which the results are consistent with the data collected. In a basic design the lack of triangulation of data is acceptable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); However, I used member checking to ensure that the findings were consistent with teachers actual perceptions. I used audit trails illustrating the findings with descriptions of my data collection and analysis in a thorough and transparent manner.

Confirmability in a qualitative study is the additional processes in the research design that verify the truthfulness of, or the meaning being attributed to, the findings (Given, 2012). According to Given (2012) confirmability is an important process that moves the findings from a one-time event to a framework that can be expanded on or built upon by others reviewing the study. Confirmability can also be described as objectivity or the lack of the researchers' own thoughts and point of view (Agee et al., 2013). In qualitative studies researcher reflexivity is essential. Reflexivity can be described as "the interconnections among a researcher, the text, the participants being studied, and the larger world" (Agee et al., 2013, p. 2). It is an iterative process of reflecting and refining which is necessary in a qualitative design (Agee et al., 2013). Agee et al. (2013) also stated confirmability can be achieved by transparently detailing any dilemmas or unexpected occurrences throughout the data collection and analyzation process which I did as needed.

Ethical Procedures

The American Educational Research Association outlined ethical procedures for educational research in the Code of Ethics (American Educational Research Association, 2011). Within this Code of Ethics, the researcher finds guiding principles and standards for conducting ethical research. The guiding principles for the standards include professional competence, integrity, professional responsibility, respect for people's rights, and social responsibility (American Educational Research Association, 2011). These principles are then broken down into twenty-two explicit standards that ensure educational research is conducted ethically and responsibly. Creswell (2014) recommended consulting the Code of Ethics before developing the proposal to ensure ethical procedures were considered in all research design aspects, as I did with the current study.

The IRB is responsible for ensuring that research studies comply with ethical standards and federal regulations (Walden, n.d.), and IRB approval must be received before recruitment or data collection can occur. After receiving IRB approval, Superintendent approval, and Principals' consent (See Appendix A), the recruitment of participants began by sending an invitation using Walden email. All participants responded via email with consent and full disclosure of all research design aspects were transparent and thoroughly discussed with participants and stakeholders involved in the research process (Creswell, 2014). This included participants' consent to audio recorded interviews, the confidentiality of data, and informing participants that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn from the study at any time. Participants were

informed that confidentiality included removing identifying information including participants' names, keeping the MacBook used in the study in my home office where I have the only access, and confidentiality in the event that participants decided not to participate. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and participants' perceptions were accurately presented in the findings.

Summary

The problem addressed in the study was that teachers' perceptions were needed about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers' about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading. This gap in practice contributed to the challenge of finding tools to monitor students' independent reading that did not result in avoidance of students' independent reading (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017).

Participant selection occurred as soon as all approvals were obtained, with data collection occurring during the 2021-2022 school year. Member checking and semistructured interviewing were used in this basic qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). First and second cycle coding occurred with NVivo software to store transcripts and my data analysis. Ethical procedures were considered in all aspects of the study design.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students' independent reading. The research question used to guide the study was the following: What are elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district? Chapter 4 provides a description of the setting, data collection, data analysis, and results of the study, including evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

The study was conducted in a Southeast U.S. school district. Teachers from two elementary schools in the district were invited to participate; however, all participants who volunteered for the study were employed at the same school. No participants volunteered from the second elementary school site recruited.

This district had been impacted by COVID-19 since early in 2020 with many teachers intermittently using Zoom for virtual instruction. In the spring of 2020, all instruction was virtual, which was a district-wide mandate due to the pandemic. During the 2020–2021 school year, instruction varied as teachers used virtual, hybrid, and face-to-face instruction. Parents were given the choice for students to remain virtual or attend face-to-face; however, instruction was often hybrid based on the number of COVID-19 cases per school site. This school site began using SLP during the 2019–2020 school year

resulting in teachers learning new curriculum during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Transitions in staffing resulted in the variance of years using SLP at this site from the expected 3 years of experience to as few as 1.5 years of experience.

The demographic factors of participants such as grade level, years using SLP, and total years teaching are presented in Table 1. The sample included eight participants from one elementary school with teaching experience from 2 to 21 years. The participants, ranging from teaching kindergarten to fourth grade, had been using SLP from 1.5 to 3 years. To protect the identity of participants, I assigned each participant a number ranging from 1 to 8.

Table 1

Demographic Data for Teacher Participants

Participant	Grade level	Years using SLP	Years teaching
1	4th	2	21
2	4th	3	8
3	2nd/3rd	3	5
4	3rd	3	9
5	K	3	5
6	4th	1.5	2
7	2nd	2	2
8	3rd	2	2

Data Collection

Data collection began after IRB approval and district approval were granted. After confirming prospective participants with principals and literacy coaches in the two elementary school sites, I sent 52 elementary teachers a recruitment email through my Walden email account on December 6, 2021. I received one volunteer from this initial recruitment email. I then sent a second recruitment email on December 17, 2021, with no

additional response from participants. Knowing that recruiting during a busy time of year could be difficult, I consulted the IRB on January 7, 2022, and requested a change in procedure to offer participants a $25 gift card. Approval was granted January 11, 2022, and a third recruitment email was sent to 51 of the 52 participants. No additional recruitment email was sent to Participant 1 because our interview had already occurred. However, I notified Participant 1 that she would receive a gift card for her participation in the study. After the third recruitment email was sent, seven more participants volunteered for the study, all from the same school site. All eight participants were sent the consent form approved by the IRB, and all eight replied to the email with the words "I consent." All eight participants agreed to a semistructured interview conducted via the Zoom platform. Two interviews were conducted during a weekend, and six interviews occurred after 4:00 pm on weeknights. All interviews were conducted between January 4 and January 25, 2022.

At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed the consent form and explained that participation was voluntary, and participants could stop their participation at any time throughout the study. All eight participants agreed to continue with data collection and participate in member checking via email after analysis was completed. Each participant was interviewed one time with no interview lasting longer than 45 minutes. I used an interview protocol to structure the interviews and asked the same nine questions of each participant (see Appendix C). Probing questions were used when needed, but the protocol remained the same for all eight interviews.

During each Zoom interview, I audio recorded the interview with a Sony digital recorder and uploaded the files to NVivo Transcription. NVivo Transcription transcribed the recordings, but due to possible inaccuracy from transcribing, I manually listened to each recording multiple times and edited the transcription as needed. The transcriptions were then uploaded to the NVivo software program on my personal laptop using the numbers assigned to each participant. All data were stored on my personal MacBook laptop, were password protected, and were secured in my locked home office. All files will be kept locked in my office for a period of 5 years and then destroyed.

There was one variation in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. In the proposal, I stated that teachers in two schools would be recruited; however, all eight participants came from one school building. This deviation had no adverse effect on the study because both school sites had implemented SLP at the same time and had both experienced the same effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, there was a variance in grade levels represented, and the data were sufficient to answer the research question. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that data collection and analysis take place simultaneously in qualitative studies. I began coding data from previous interviews before all data were collected, allowing the emerging nature of the design to occur. In vivo was used for first cycle coding, which Saldana (2016) stated is useful for novice researchers or for prioritizing participants' voices, both of which applied in the current study. In vivo, also known as literal coding, refers to coding words or phrases from the

actual language of the participants instead of codes created by the researcher (Saldana, 2016). Using the NVivo software program, I coded participants' exact words and phrases by reading the transcripts line by line and highlighting text. I manually assigned in vivo codes of the participants' exact words or phrases within the NVivo program. I completed this with each transcript, noting that as I manually coded the data there were fewer new in vivo codes assigned with each successive interview.

After coding all eight transcripts, I determined that I had created 99 in vivo codes of participants' words or phrases. Many words and phrases were coded only once; however, there were many words and phrases used by multiple participants that were coded multiple times. With in vivo coding, I was able to analyze how many times exact words or phrases were used by participants in first cycle coding. Out of the 99 in vivo codes created, 52 codes, or exact words, of the participants were stated by only one participant one time. There were 12 additional codes that one participant repeated two times and four codes repeated three or more times by only one participant. There were 31 first cycle in vivo codes used by two or more participants. Those 31 codes, the number of participants who used the code, and the number of times the code was referenced in total are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

First Cycle In Vivo Codes

In vivo code	Participant total	Number of times referenced
Access	4	9
Accountable	6	16
Beginning	2	5
Benefit	2	2
Book boxes	4	9
Check	3	5
Choose	4	10
Comprehension questions	5	9
Dashboard	2	2
Excited	3	6
Expectation	3	4
Help	4	15
Independent reading	8	18
Interest	6	14
Level	7	25
Mentor texts	2	6
Minutes	3	9
Modeled	2	2
Monitor	5	9
Motivated	4	7
Picking books	2	2
Program	5	33
Pull them	2	5
Reading logs	3	4
Reading online	2	2
Recommending a book to peers	2	2
Struggling	4	7
Tool	3	5
Track	3	8
Variety	2	3

As I began to organize the codes for second cycle coding, I printed the words or phrases of each code from the NVivo program to show them in context from the participants' transcription. I reviewed all codes in this manner manually to begin finding patterns and discovering categories for second cycle coding. Second cycle pattern coding is a way to group larger units from first cycle coding into meaningful and emergent themes or categories (Saldana, 2016). As I began second cycle coding, I first looked at the words and phrases in the data from first cycle coding that showed patterns or words coded by multiple participants. For example, the word "level" was spoken by seven participants. By looking at the participants' language in context through the NVivo program transcription printouts, I was able to begin discovering patterns to organize the data more concisely.

I then began second cycle pattern coding using the NVivo software program by manually creating categories generated from the first cycle coding data, research question, and literature review. This was accomplished by manually merging the in vivo codes with commonalities into categories within the NVivo program. After completing this step, I had the following second cycle pattern categories: accountability, benefit of technology, improves teacher practices, lack of knowledge of the program, monitoring, reading at home, scholastic literacy components, student-centered, supporting, teacher-controlled, teacher feedback of program. From these 11 categories, I began looking at patterns in the data to develop themes. The four themes I developed from second cycle coding are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

In Vivo Codes, Categories, and Themes

In vivo code	Category	Theme
Accountable, aimlessly wandering around looking for a book, component, flipping through it, see	Accountability	Benefit of Using Technology to Monitor and Support Reading
Check, clicked, monitor, see what they were doing	Monitoring	
Cool things, digital natives, excited, like a little library, reading online, Spanish, stamina, tendency	Benefit of Technology Tool	
Meet with them, quick snapshot	Improves Teacher Practices	
Access, COVID, I kind of, more receptive, resource	Reading at Home	
Book review, celebrate, choose, difficulty, easy, engage, gives them a chance to be the star, interest, intrinsic motivation, option, ownership, picking books, pulled it up, read the book, recommending a book to peers, student friendly, supplement, volume, voraciously	Student-Centered	Student-Centered Opportunities
Book conference, book conversation, chats, combination, suggestions, talking points, that's still a lot of work	Supporting	
I haven't really, lacking my knowledge of, no one's told me, school, trained	Lack of Knowledge of Program	Additional Training Needed
Assume, mentor texts, normal, read aloud	Scholastic Literacy Components	
Allow them, assign, extrinsic motivation, I let them, just read, learning, procedures, reading logs, required	Teacher-Controlled	
One thing I would like to recommend, my recommendation would be, I should be able to see, would be helpful, in my opinion	Teacher Feedback of Program	Teacher Recommendations

Results

The research question in this basic qualitative study addressed elementary teachers' perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The themes that emerged from coding and data analysis were sufficient to answer the research question. The findings are presented as themes, along with participant quotations in support of each theme.

Theme 1: Benefit of Using Technology to Monitor and Support Reading

The theme benefit of using technology to monitor and support reading emerged from the following categories: accountability, monitoring, benefit of technology tool, improves teacher practices, and reading at home. Codes and categories for this theme were referenced 158 times in the NVivo data analysis summary. Teachers were asked open-ended questions about using SLP with independent reading in the classroom, and all eight participants stated that it was beneficial to have in the classroom. One of the most prevalent reasons was the accountability that SLP offers teachers, students, and parents. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 stated that the program helped them keep students accountable for reading. For example, Participant 1 stated that the program "held them accountable to reading it, not just looking at the pictures or flipping through it." Participant 1 also said "I show them my dashboard and say 'I know you haven't finished any books. It says right here.' And I think when they realize that I'm seeing what they're doing, then that makes a big difference." Participant 3 told me that she pulls reports to tell parents the actual minutes students read and "it helps me with that accountability." Participant 4 stated "that can also be your type of reading log or accountability for

reading after school." Participant 8 said "I really think it just helps them on their own to be motivated and hold themselves accountable because they use that as their own intrinsic motivation instead of me being on them." Participants agreed that SLP is a beneficial tool for holding students accountable to independent reading in the classroom.

Participants also stated that SLP is beneficial for monitoring independent reading. Participant 2 stated that SLP was beneficial because "you can actually see that they're on there, see their minutes. And when they take the little quizzes, you can see what they made on it, as well." Participant 1 said the program "gave me an opportunity more so to monitor what they were reading, to have better book chats, book chats that were relevant to what they were reading." Participant 8 said "if they were just reading paper books, I wouldn't be able to monitor their minutes or monitor their progress as much. And so, it would be harder for me to have those conversations. It's harder for me to track." Participant 2 mentioned the benefit of students not all having to "show me their book. I can just log on quickly" to monitor whether students were reading. Participant 2 added "I can track the level of the book that they're reading as well."

Another benefit of using technology to monitor and support students' independent reading was the variety of books students can read within SLP. Participant 7 stated that students use the digital books within the program for research projects because SLP provides more variety on particular topics than what P7 can provide in the classroom. In further emphasis, Participant 3 stated SLP "gave students better variety, in my opinion, of books that they could read." Participant 5, a kindergarten teacher, stated "one of the cool things is that some of the books are read to you…so that kids can hear the story first

before they practice trying to read them themselves." Participant 6 agreed that the option of listening to books in the program "gives them access to books that they maybe wouldn't have access to" which was beneficial.

Participants described ways that SLP improved teacher practices. Participant 2 stated "we have a lot of different things that we have to do on a daily basis and so it's a great way for us to have a quick snapshot of what our students are doing, what they're reading." As described above, SLP also allowed participants to have "more relevant" book chats and to not only monitor their minutes but monitor their growth (P8). Participant 8 added "it's a great tool as a teacher to be able to track their progress and use that for my conversations." Similarly, Participant 1 discussed that SLP saved time by allowing her to meet more with individual students.

Participants stated that SLP was a beneficial technology tool for monitoring and supporting independent reading at home. Participants perceived the program beneficial for having access to a variety of e-books at home. Participant 2 stated "I think it's a great tool for them to be able to show their parents and for parents to know if they don't have books at home, they do have access to different books that they can read." Participant 7 stated that always having "access to independent reading books at home" through the program was a good thing for families that "didn't have books to read at home." Participant 7 added "our school library isn't operating right now because of COVID so they're probably pretty bored of the books that I have" reiterating the positive benefit of students being able to access books at home on their devices.

Theme 2: Student-Centered Opportunities

The theme student-centered opportunities was referenced 93 times in the NVivo data analysis summary. The two categories that comprised this theme were student-centered and supporting. The student-centered components of SLP and benefits for supporting students' reading lives both contributed to the theme.

All eight participants found the student-centered opportunities offered by use of SLP were advantageous to supporting students' independent reading. Participants stated many in vivo codes that merged into this theme (see Table 3) including interest, intrinsic motivation, ownership, and student friendly; according to the literature review these are all attributes of a student-centered environment. Participant 2 said "I think it's important for us to allow students to be able to make their own goals" and "it just gives them more ownership to take pride in working toward a goal that they have established for themselves." SLP is marketed as an independent reading management tool that allows students to make and track their own independent reading goals.

Another component of SLP that participants discussed was that students logged in and began using the program by completing an interest inventory. All eight participants stated that the interest inventory was beneficial for providing students with choices and support for finding appropriate books to read within the program. Participant 1 said "the little survey they give them does a good job with trying to pinpoint their interests." Participant 2 said "I love that they give them the interest test …it's a way to engage them without them feeling like they're being tested." Participant 7 stated "it's a good way to

know that the books they're selecting are where they kind of need to be, but yet it gives them the freedom to choose where they want - what they want to read."

Another student-centered aspect of the program mentioned by Participant 1 was the ability of students to recommend books to peers. Participant 1 stated that students enjoyed recommending books and did not feel pressured with that type of response after reading the book. Participant 1 stated "we practiced reviewing a book and they loved doing a book review and the pressure was off." This aligns with the literature review and the recommendations of Ryan and Deci (2017) to use authentic opportunities where students are provided choices and digital resources that apply to their daily lives. Participant 1 perceived that aspect of SLP as being appealing to students and encouraged the intrinsic motivation of her students. She concluded "I can't explain it, but they do become so motivated in wanting to read more."

Participants also stated that SLP was helpful for supporting students' independent reading. For example, Participant 1 stated "I found that I was able to meet with them more." The ability to meet more often with individual students was beneficial for supporting students' independent reading. Participate 1 also stated "once they got into it and they understood that we were going to have those book chats and some of those little conversations, it was like all of a sudden one day they just started voraciously reading."

Question 4 in the interview protocol (See Appendix C) stated "how do you perceive that SLP has impacted your students' reading habits and volume?" Participant 3 said "I think that the program really helped build their stamina, like their ability to be engaged for a sustained period of time." All eight participants stated that SLP was

beneficial for supporting independent reading in the classroom and no participants stated that reading volume decreased or reported that students avoided reading while using SLP.

Theme 3: Additional Training Needed

The theme additional training needed was referenced 90 times in the NVivo data analysis summary and was attributed to eight participants. Three categories contributed to this theme including lack of knowledge of program, scholastic literacy components, and teacher controlled. This theme emerged based on the interview protocol in which I asked participants specific questions related to SLP (see Appendix C). Some teachers were unaware of student-centered components the program offered mentioned in question 6 (Appendix C). The category teacher controlled emerged from the literature review and the definitions of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. Teacher-controlled behaviors were found to inhibit intrinsic motivation which SLP was developed to encourage. Participants that used teacher controlled language could possibly benefit from training on the intrinsically motivating capabilities of SLP, leading to the decision to include the category teacher-controlled in this theme.

Question 6 of the Interview protocol was “what is your perception of the student-centered aspect of SLP such as students entering their own goals, keeping track of or logging their books online, and recommending books to peers?” Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 expressed a lack of knowledge of SLP that could benefit from additional training. Participant 6 stated “there’s still quite a few things that I don’t fully understand when it comes to Pro, but we mainly use it just as a resource for books.” Participant 7 stated “honestly, I did not know how much it could do. Like, I typically just check their minutes

to kind of see if they're on task while I'm with a small group." Participant 7 said "I didn't know that they could like recommend stuff to other students within the program." Participant 8 stated that she did not know the program allowed students to recommend books to peers.

Many participants were unclear that SLP was a program that could be used separately from the Scholastic Literacy Curriculum (SLC). Participants 1, 4, 5, and 7 mentioned other features of the SLC such as mentor texts, read alouds, and guided reading while answering questions regarding their perceptions of SLP. When asked how independent reading has changed since using SLP, Participant 1 said "when you read when you use SLC, some of the mentor texts that you read, the kids want to read them too." The mentor texts mentioned by Participant 1 are only available in SLC, not in SLP. When asked the same question, Participant 5 stated "it helps them understand the rest of my ELA lesson that I'm presenting during the day. Like it helps them, I think, understand how reader's workshop works better and how writers workshop works with Scholastic and the phonics instruction." The components mentioned by Participant 5 are included in SLC, not SLP. Participant 7 explained that their building was the first in the district to use the Scholastic curriculum and she was overwhelmed with learning the program while teaching during the COVID pandemic, which was a contributing factor.

Participants used words associated with teacher-controlled practices during data collection that the literature review showed are not conducive to intrinsic motivation. Since SLP was developed as an independent reading management tool to encourage intrinsic motivation to read, teacher-controlled practices may have adverse effects on

students utilizing the program to its full capability. These words included words and phrases such as allow them, assign, extrinsic motivation, I let them, procedures, reading logs, and required. Both Raney (2017) and Routman (2016) cautioned that controlling or restricting choices decreased student interest and engagement. These words and phrases were used with teachers' current understanding and perceptions of SLP but could change with additional training on the benefits of giving students choice and autonomy with independent reading.

Eight participants discussed the word level during data collection. Participant 3 stated that she preferred to use guided reading levels and not the Lexile level given in SLP "which made it difficult for me to progress monitor them." Participants also discussed changing levels, reading a particular level, or referred to students as higher or lower leveled students. I included this category in the theme additional training needed because the literature showed that choice reading is important in an authentic reading life of students. SLP was developed to monitor and support students' independent reading and choices, yet participants' current understanding did not show that participants understood the importance of choice and the student-centered aspects of the program while using teacher-controlled language. Additionally, Participant 3 stated "I feel that they should have made me a better teacher dashboard so that the teacher would be able to kind of see the reading levels better" explaining that she did not use Lexile levels and Lexile was an unfamiliar leveling system to her. Participant 3 would benefit from training on how to change from Lexile to guided reading levels within the program.

Theme 4: Teacher Recommendations

The theme teacher recommendations was referenced 16 times in the NVivo data analysis summary. The literature review showed that it is important to partner with teachers in education research; therefore, I included this theme to honor participants' voices in the results. Participant 3 stated that she would like for the mentor texts in SLC to be available on SLP for the students to independently read. She explained that those mentor texts are not included in SLP and students often looked for them within the SLP program. Participant 5 said "they could definitely expand a little bit more with level A, level B stories. A little more variety, in my opinion." Participant 5 also said "I just think that maybe taking the program and having like an older version and a younger version, would be helpful." Participant 5 is a kindergarten teacher and suggested a K-2 version for younger students and a 3-5 version for older students. Participant 8 concluded the interview by stating "I think that it's an awesome program to have, and I love being able to use it for an option for my students to independently read."

Discrepant Data

Discrepant data is data that may support alternative explanations or offer alternative ways to present data (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), one method to improve credibility is to spend ample time with the data purposefully looking for variation or discrepant cases. This was accomplished by manually listening to transcripts repeatedly, manually coding participants words and phrases with in vivo first cycle coding, and manually completing the analysis of codes to categories to themes. By spending ample time with the data, I was able to discern

discrepant cases in the data. Although Participant 5 stated the program was beneficial for monitoring and supporting independent reading, he described it as too challenging for his kindergarten students. He explained "I think it's a program that's better suited for older kids just because of how to use it. Like with kindergarteners, you know, they're still having, you know, learning how to read letter sounds." Participant 5 stated the following:

> I just think that it's been challenging teaching since COVID, you know. I think if things got back to normal and I could do some of the things that I would like to do and then even in terms of Scholastic, you know, that I can't do. I think that the program would be more effective.

This discrepant data did not challenge my findings since Participant 5 is teaching kindergarten during the COVID pandemic and stated that in normal circumstances it would be beneficial for kindergarten students.

Another discrepancy in the data was the differing perspectives of the participants on the type of motivation students experienced using SLP. Six participants stated the motivating factors of the program were the benefits of using technology and the student-centered opportunities the program offers. Two participants stated the motivating factor was based more on the procedures and expectations in their classrooms to use the program during rotations or independent reading. Although participants varied on perceptions of why students were motivated to read, participants' data showed that no students avoided reading while using SLP. By spending ample time immersed in the data, I was able to discern these discrepancies in participants' data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is established by describing the processes and approaches a researcher takes to assess the rigor of a study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Stahl and King (2020), evidence of trustworthiness ensures confidence in the findings of a study. Trustworthiness can be established by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research ensures that the research design, instruments, and data are aligned, and findings are accurately presented (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I have ensured alignment of the problem, purpose, conceptual framework, gap, and research question to the design of a basic qualitative study as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Another method used to establish credibility was member checking (Stahl & King, 2020) which I used in the study to confirm that teachers' perceptions were accurately interpreted. Since the only source of data collection in this basic qualitative study was semistructured interviews, member checking ensured participants' words and perceptions were accurately recorded and analyzed (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was accomplished by emailing a summary of the findings to each participant and including each participants' direct quotations that were used in the study. Participants were asked to read the email and respond back to me with "I agree" if they agreed with my findings and felt their perceptions were correctly interpreted. All participants agreed and there were no adjustments made to the strategies proposed to establish credibility.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative study does not ensure generalizability but rather the notion that a study can be applied to, or compared with, other settings (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), providing detailed descriptions of the study and context leaves the extent to which the findings apply to other situations up to the reader. Detailed descriptions refers to highly descriptive details about the setting and findings (see Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). I have addressed transferability by providing descriptions of teachers' demographics, participants' quotations, and have accurately presented the findings in both tables and narrative form by including a transparent audit trail. I have included a detailed description of the time frame for data collection to increase transferability (Stahl & King, 2020). A small qualitative study with few participants makes transferability unlikely even with detailed description and will be up to the reader to determine whether their students and setting are similar enough to be applicable.

I proposed to also address transferability by obtaining data from participants in two different elementary building locations within the district to add variation to the sampling. The two elementary building sites were purposefully chosen because teachers used SLP at both sites which were approximately thirty miles apart. Both buildings had different demographics in teacher experience, minority students, and reading proficiency, which would increase the likeliness that a variety of perceptions would enable more readers to apply the findings to other settings and contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Yet, the participants who volunteered for the study all came from the same building

location; therefore, the other building purposefully chosen was not represented. The teachers who volunteered did vary in grades taught, years of experience, and years implementing SLP, (see Table 1). This was the only adjustment to the strategies to ensure transferability.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative studies refers to the assurance that data collection is consistent with the research design and answers the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that both reliability and dependability are the extent to which the results are consistent with the data collected. In a basic design the lack of triangulation of data is acceptable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); however, I used member checking to ensure that the findings were consistent with teachers' actual perceptions. I accomplished this by emailing each participant as described above. There were no adjustments to the consistency strategies stated in Chapter 3.

Confirmability

Confirmability in a qualitative study is the additional processes in the research design that verify the truthfulness of, or the meaning being attributed to the findings (Given, 2012). According to Given (2012) confirmability is an important process that moves the findings from a one-time event to a framework that can be expanded on or built upon by others reviewing the study. Confirmability can also be described as objectivity or the lack of the researchers' own thoughts and point of view (Agee et al., 2013). According to Stahl and King (2020), using precision and accuracy in research contributes to objectivity. One method I used to establish confirmability was first cycle in

vivo coding. By coding participants actual words and phrases, I thoroughly analyzed the data line by line, highlighting participants' words which decreased the possibility of researcher bias

In qualitative studies researcher reflexivity is essential. Reflexivity can be described as "the interconnections among a researcher, the text, the participants being studied, and the larger world" (Agee et al., 2013, p. 2). It is an iterative process of reflecting and refining which is necessary in a qualitative design (see Agee et al., 2013). Agee et al. (2013) also stated confirmability can be achieved by transparently detailing any dilemmas or unexpected occurrences throughout the data collection and analyzation. This was accomplished by transparently detailing that all participants volunteered from one building location despite inviting participants from two elementary schools to participate, which was an unexpected occurrence. I have also transparently stated times and dates of data collection, as well as clearly presented the data analysis in tables and in narrative form.

Summary

The research question for this study was "what are elementary teachers' perceptions in a Southeast U.S. school district of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with Scholastic Literacy Pro?" I discovered four themes including benefit of using technology to monitor and support independent reading, student-centered opportunities, additional training needed, and teacher recommendations. Through the analysis of codes to categories and themes, I found that all eight participants in the study perceived SLP beneficial for monitoring and supporting independent reading. I found that

all eight participants could benefit from more training on SLP, particularly the student-centered aspects of the program. Some participants thought it was a program students could use for independent reading but did not realize students could set goals, recommend books, or log physical books into the program. Throughout data collection participants had recommendations they perceived would improve SLP and I have included these recommendations to honor the participants' voices. In Chapter 5, I present the interpretation of my findings and limitations of the study. I provide my recommendations and discuss implications for social change of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The nature of the study was a basic qualitative study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semistructured interviews were conducted with eight elementary teachers using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district to explore their perceptions about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP. Data were analyzed by first and second cycle coding of participants' words and phrases organized from codes to categories and themes in an emergent design. Understanding how elementary teachers perceive SLP was important for both teacher practices and student outcomes pertaining to independent reading. This study was important because the literature showed that independent reading was an essential component of reading achievement (Hebbecker et al., 2019; ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2019; Stover et al., 2017; Stutz et al., 2016) and monitoring independent reading in a manner that does not result in students' avoidance of independent reading is vital.

The key findings revealed that teachers perceived SLP as beneficial for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading. Participants perceived both the technology-based platform and student-centered components of SLP were beneficial, even though more training on the program is needed to use all of the benefits available within the program. Furthermore, no participants reported students avoiding reading or decreased reading volume while using SLP.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings revealed that participants perceived SLP as beneficial for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading. This finding is pertinent to independent reading pedagogy and practices because the literature showed that monitoring independent reading is important to ensure successful implementation of students' independent reading (Brannan & Giles, 2017; ILA, 2018). Challenges to monitoring independent reading in the literature included the shortage of time in teachers' daily schedules (ILA, 2020). Raney (2017) found that teachers often use independent reading time to check email or complete paperwork, which enabled students to fake read. Current participants found SLP beneficial for monitoring because teachers were able to quickly monitor actual minutes read and students' comprehension of books within the program. This finding concurs with Brannan and Giles (2017) who found that teachers valued accountability practices that provided evidence of both quantity and quality of independent reading. Similarly, Brannan et al. (2020) found that teachers valued accountability practices that showed students were actively reading while providing evidence of reading progress, which current participants stated SLP enabled them to do. Participants also stated that SLP allowed them more time to confer with students while giving them quick snapshots on the dashboard of students' current reading habits to discuss while conferring.

The findings revealed that participants perceived both the technology-based platform and student-centered components of SLP were beneficial for monitoring and supporting independent reading. These findings are consistent with findings in the

literature that today's students prefer a student-centered environment in which they can choose to use digital resources over traditional methods (Harrell & Bynum, 2018; McVicker, 2019; Neokleous, 2019; Riegel & Mete, 2017; Wulan, 2019). The literature review showed the importance of researching new technology that improves instructional strategies and student outcomes (Bull et al., 2016; Scott & Meeussen, 2017). My findings showed that participants valued the responsiveness of the program to students' interest, the availability of the dashboard for quick snapshots of students' reading, and the availability of e-books within the digital platform that students can choose to read. Participants stated that SLP also offered the option to listen to books while reading, which is beneficial for giving students access to books they may not be able to read on their own.

The literature review also showed that teachers valued accountability measures in which students could analyze their data and reading progress (Willson & Falcon, 2018). Participants in the current study confirmed these findings by stating that SLP held students accountable for their independent reading and gave them ownership of their goals. Scott and Meeussen (2017) stated that opportunities for students to set their goals and take responsibility for their learning include allowing students to choose digital methods, which concur with the findings of my study. Participants reported that SLP was very student friendly and that students could access the program easily and proficiently. According to Jacobson (2017), incorporating digital resources and creating a collaborative environment led to effective independent reading classroom management and practices. Current participants stated that students were motivated by the technology

platform of SLP and enjoyed sharing their independent reading books and habits with teachers, peers, and parents. This concurs with Stutz et al. (2016) who found that classroom practices that increase intrinsic motivation foster engagement, autonomy, and voluminous reading. Furthermore, participants stated the platform allowed students access to books at home they may not have had access to otherwise.

The findings of the study revealed that more training on the program is needed for participants to use all of the student-centered aspects of the program. This finding emerged from the interview protocol (see Appendix C) as participants found they were not aware of some of the capabilities of SLP. All participants expressed a desire to participate in additional training to maximize the student-centered options the program offers. The findings also suggest additional training on Lexile level would be beneficial to teachers unfamiliar with the term or how it correlates to levels used proficiently by the teacher. Furthermore, teachers were unaware that they could toggle between guided reading level and Lexile level in the settings of the program.

Bull et al. (2016) addressed the need for researchers to conduct studies of new technologies used in the classroom to contribute to the growing body of technology integration in the literature. At the time of this writing, SLP was underresearched in the literature, which could contribute to participants' lack of knowledge of the full capability the program offers both teachers and students. According to Harrell and Bynum (2018), schools are responsible for integrating technology and leaving more traditional models behind when teaching digital natives. The findings of the current study showed that more training is needed when implementing new technologies in the classroom.

The findings revealed that no participants perceived that students avoided reading or decreased their reading volume while using SLP. The literature review showed that most independent reading monitoring methods have extrinsically based incentives such as traditional reading logs and the program AR. The literature also showed these extrinsically based methods had adverse effects on students' reading volume (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). Because no current participants reported that student volume decreased or that students avoided independent reading, SLP was found to be beneficial for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading.

SDT posits that certain conditions must be present to foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn. Ryan and Deci (2017) found that the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness must be fulfilled for self-regulated or self-directed learning to occur. Ryan and Deci addressed challenges in the classroom that inhibit conditions needed for self-directed learning to occur, such as mandated curriculum, high-stakes pressure, and outcome-focused practices. Ryan and Deci explained why today's students, labeled digital natives, prefer using technology and flourish in a student-centered classroom environment. SLP offers students opportunities to develop intrinsic motivation through choice reading, goal setting, and collaboration by recommending and reading peer-recommended books within a technology platform students feel competent using.

The findings aligned with SDT by revealing that all participants perceived SLP as beneficial for monitoring and supporting independent reading. The findings revealed that participants perceived both the technology-based platform and student-centered

components of SLP were beneficial for monitoring and supporting independent reading. The findings also revealed that no participants perceived that students avoided reading or decreased their reading volume while using SLP. The literature review showed that extrinsically motivating methods for monitoring independent reading resulted in avoidance of reading (Fisher et al., 2020; Raney, 2017; Smith et al., 2017), and current findings showed that SLP was a favorable method for holding students accountable for independent reading without decreasing their reading volume.

Limitations of the Study

The study's limitations included researcher bias, lack of an independent peer reviewer, geographical location, and participants' knowledge of the program. To address researcher bias, I provided transparency in all study design aspects and used member checking to ensure that experiences and perceptions were not misinterpreted during data collection and analyzation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The lack of an independent peer reviewer was a limitation of the study. Geographical location was a limitation because the data in this study were limited to elementary teachers who use SLP in one Southeast U.S. school district; therefore, results are not transferable to elementary teachers who do not use SLP in the classroom or to other school districts that use SLP. However, providing transparency in all study design aspects increased opportunities for transferability by offering guidance in contexts similar to those found in the current study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another limitation discovered during data collection and analysis was the finding that participants could benefit from more training to use all of the student-centered components of SLP.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future studies include different geographical locations to increase transferability (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I found little research of teachers' perceptions about SLP during the literature review. The findings of the current study apply to one school in one Southeast U.S. school district. Increasing transferability would further fill the gap in practice this study addressed.

Another recommendation for future studies would be to explore teachers' perceptions of SLP after additional training had been conducted and teachers were more experienced with the program. Although teachers' perceptions were accurately depicted in data analysis and interpretation, I found that teachers could benefit from more training on the program. Conducting studies with teachers more proficient with the student-centered aspects of the program could provide a deeper understanding of monitoring and supporting independent reading with SLP. Studying the effectiveness of teachers' implementation of SLP after professional development would be beneficial to teacher practices and student outcomes.

A final recommendation for future studies would be to explore students' perceptions of SLP for monitoring and supporting independent reading. Filetti (2016) concluded that there was a gap in practice of finding resources that students deemed helpful in managing their reading. Exploring students' perceptions of SLP could help address that gap in practice.

Implications

Independent reading has been demonstrated to be an essential component of reading achievement (Hebbecker et al., 2019; ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2019; Stover et al., 2017; Stutz et al., 2016). Teachers value accountability practices that show students are actively reading and provide evidence of reading progress (Brannan et al., 2020). Findings from the current study concur with Brannan et al. (2020) because participants valued being able to see the minutes students were actively reading along with the progress students were making on comprehension quizzes. However, it is vital that teachers monitor and support students' independent reading in a manner that does not result in avoidance of reading. When asked how SLP impacted reading volume, no participants in the study reported a decrease in students' independent reading volume while using SLP. Participants perceived SLP as student-friendly, motivating, and efficient way to have a quick snapshot of students' independent reading progress.

In the COVID-19 virtual teaching environment, monitoring and supporting virtual students' independent reading has presented a new challenge to teachers. As reported by current participants, SLP provides measurable data to monitor students' reading progress within an application that also offers e-books students can read from any device. The platform's responsiveness to students' reading choices is similar to other responsive platforms that are beneficial in classrooms with students struggling with reading choices or teachers who lack knowledge of books students would like to read (Barone & Barone, 2018; Stover et al., 2017).

In a virtual environment, it is even more critical for students to feel they are part of a reading community (Hendricks, 2018). SLP allows students, teachers, and parents to partner to monitor and support independent reading in this COVID-19 virtual environment. Capotosto et al. (2017) found that parents valued and supported their students' reading habits at home, and SLP blends the home–school connection. The real-time component offered by SLP allows both parents and teachers to view student bookshelves and reading choices on any device. This connection can be particularly beneficial in a remote learning environment due to COVID-19. SLP can provide students with an avenue to stay connected with peers, allow teachers to monitor student reading habits remotely, and allow teachers to partner with parents in reviewing students' virtual bookshelves. Virtual bookshelves are shared in real time instead of a paper reading log or journal, which must be shared physically among stakeholders. The social aspect of the technology tool can benefit students' motivation during a global health crisis and remote learning environment (Pope, 2020). Furthermore, as districts in the United States prioritize family engagement, SLP fosters the home–school connection by allowing teachers and parents to work together in an autonomy-supportive manner that allows students to control their independent reading (Capotosto et al., 2017).

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers about monitoring and supporting students' independent reading using SLP in a Southeast U.S. school district. The gap in practice this study addressed was teachers' use of SLP in the classroom to monitor and support students'

independent reading. The literature review supported the foundational merit of the importance of SDT in independent reading motivation. SLP was created as an intrinsically motivating independent reading management tool, yet there was little research found of the phenomenon. I sought to explore teachers' perceptions of SLP to add their voices to the literature regarding independent reading pedagogy and practices. The key findings revealed that participants perceived SLP as beneficial for monitoring and supporting students' independent reading. The findings also revealed that participants perceived both the technology-based platform and student-centered components of SLP were beneficial for monitoring and supporting independent reading, even though it was found that more training on the program was needed for participants. Furthermore, no participants reported students avoiding reading or decreasing their reading volume while using SLP. This study may lead to improved teacher practices and student independent reading outcomes. Students must be given an environment to grow and flourish, to be engaged and motivated, and to find themselves lost within the pages of a book.

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Appendix A: Consent Letter to Building Principals

Dear Building Principal,

I am writing to request permission to begin the recruitment process for a research study I am conducting. I am currently enrolled in the Reading, Literacy, and Assessment doctoral program at Walden University and am writing my dissertation. The study is titled Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Scholastic Literacy Pro to Monitor and Support Students' Independent Reading.

I hope to recruit elementary teachers from your building that would like to participate in the study. Interested teachers will need to use Scholastic Literacy Pro to monitor independent reading in their classrooms. Teachers that volunteer to participate will be fully informed of the study and given a consent form to be signed and returned to me. All data collected will remain confidential and used only for the study.

Participants will be recruited by email invitation through district email. Once data collection begins, I will conduct interviews at an agreed-upon time and setting or via the Zoom platform. Interviews will not be conducted during the school day. The interviews will take no longer than 60 minutes. Participants will have an opportunity to preview data for accuracy before final submission of the dissertation. No costs will be incurred by either the school or individual participants that volunteer for the study.

Your approval to begin this process is greatly appreciated. If your approval is obtained, I will follow up with an email once invitations have been sent, participants identified, and data collection is about to begin. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. You may contact me anytime at the email address or phone number listed above.

If you agree, please sign below, and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,

Lana Bates

Approved: _____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix B: Email to Teachers

A letter of invitation will be emailed to purposely chosen elementary teachers in the district accessed via the district listserv email. The email to each elementary teacher will state the following:

Dear Elementary Teacher:

I am a doctoral candidate enrolled in the Reading, Literacy, and Assessment doctoral program at Walden University and am writing my dissertation. The study is titled Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Scholastic Literacy Pro to Monitor and Support Students' Independent Reading.

I am seeking elementary teachers from the district that would like to participate in the study. Interested teachers will need to use Scholastic Literacy Pro in the classroom. I am interested in learning your perceptions of monitoring and supporting students' independent reading with this technology tool. If you volunteer to participate, your interview will be no longer than 60 minutes at an agreed-upon time and location away from school. Interviews may also be conducted via the Zoom platform on an account created specifically for the study, if you prefer Zoom. All data collected will remain confidential and used only for the study, and you will have an opportunity to review the data I collect to ensure that your perceptions are correctly and confidentially interpreted. No identifying information will be included in the study.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please respond to this email address @ lana.bates@waldenu.edu.

Sincerely,

Lana Bates

Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Participants will be welcomed, consent reviewed, and participants reminded that the interview will be audiotaped and no longer than 60 minutes.

Q1: Tell me about using Scholastic Literacy Pro with independent reading in your classroom.

Q2: How has independent reading changed in your classroom since you began using Scholastic Literacy Pro?

Q3: How do you perceive Scholastic Literacy Pro for monitoring students' independent reading?

Q4: How do you perceive that Scholastic Literacy Pro has impacted your students' reading habits and volume?

Q5: What is your perception of self-direction and motivation students feel with Scholastic Literacy Pro?

Q6: What is your perception of the student-centered aspect of Scholastic Literacy Pro such as students entering their own goals, keeping track of or logging their books online, and recommending books to peers.

Q7: How do you use Scholastic Literacy Pro for providing accountability to other stakeholders (such as your administrators, colleagues, or students' parents) for students' independent reading?

Q8: How has Scholastic Literacy Pro impacted communication and/or collaboration with parents regarding students' independent reading?

Q9: What would you like to add that I have not explicitly asked about your perceptions of monitoring and supporting students with Scholastic Literacy Pro?