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How Teachers Promote Academic Success of Primary Grade Students in Rural Schools by Supporting Their Resilience

Miranda Kay Teston
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education

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Miranda Kay Teston

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

How Teachers Promote Academic Success of Primary Grade Students in Rural Schools

by Supporting Their Resilience

Miranda Kay Teston

MA, Armstrong Atlantic State University, 2011

BS, University of Coastal Georgia, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2022

Abstract

Low levels of academic success for primary grade students attending rural schools located in the southern region of the United States may be related to student resilience. Researchers have found that educators can support the development of students' resilience, which can result in improved academic success, but little is known about how teachers in rural schools promote their students' academic success by supporting the development of their resilience. Guided by a conceptual framework that combined ecological systems theory with resilience theory, this basic qualitative study explored how rural-school teachers promoted the academic success of primary grade students by supporting the development of resilience in their students at home, school, and in the community; and how these teachers described the influences of educational resilience on their students' academic success. Twelve educators, who had professional learning opportunities regarding student resilience and three or more years of teaching experience were recruited using snowball sampling through social media and publicly available e-mail addresses. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using an inductive approach to identify codes, patterns, categories, and themes. Five themes emerged: building a community of practice, promoting adaptive systems, creating a safe and enriched environment, implementing a whole child approach, and engaging in reflective practice. Heightened awareness about ways to support the development of resilience in rural primary grade students could lead to positive social change if teachers adopt these practices and students experience academic success.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to those who love me most. To my husband, thank you for all the sacrifices you made to support me throughout this journey. Christopher James, your support, encouragement, and love have allowed me to accomplish a dream that I had given up on. Thank you for pushing me out of my comfort zone. To Jacob, you have endured every step of this journey with us, never making me feel guilty for the countless hours of work required. Jacob, please know you are capable of far greater than I and just as you believed in me, I believe in you even more. To Elijah, your drive to succeed via hard work and determination are paramount. There have been times during this journey, unbeknownst to you when you were my inspiration to dig deeper, work harder, and know I could do a little more. To Sabrina, thank you for reflecting on various teacher concepts with me during this journey and sharing in my enthusiasm for education. To Hunter, thank you for always being an ever-positive presence and for letting me be your mom, you are a blessing. To all my children, let this accomplishment serve as a reminder that you can achieve anything you set your mind to with hard work, dedication, and resilience. To my sister, Kimberly, thank you for being more than a sister and surprising us with supper regularly for the last two years and ten months. To my father, Wilbur, thank you for instilling a faith of God in me and teaching me through example to not stop until the task is complete and I am pleased with the results. To my stepmother, Barbara, thank you for your consistent positive support and encouragement, especially on the days I needed it more than you could have known. To my Aunt Gracie, thank you for your heartfelt words and having time for me share my accomplishments with you along the way. I love and appreciate each of you more than you will ever know. Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Primary grade students in rural Title 1 schools located in the southern region of the United States consistently scored below their non rural peers on standardized tests (Redacted Department of Education, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021). According to Frazier et al. (2021), one of the causes of low student academic achievement may be lack of educational resilience. Researchers have determined that resilience is a key noncognitive factor, or soft skill, that allows children to overcome adversity and promotes academic achievement (Buzzetto-Hollywood & Mitchell, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019; Masten, 2018). There is little research that explores how educators perceive student resilience in the educational environment; and no research that specifically explored the perspectives of primary grade educators. Skinner and Saxton (2019) explained that developmental studies about academic coping and resilience are vague, largely atheoretical, and consist of simple notions from single perspectives. Findings of this study will potentially promote social change by heightening teachers' awareness levels about the importance of educational resilience in supporting students who may be experiencing adversities. In Chapter 1, I present an overview of the study's background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research question. I will also justify the conceptual framework that I am using to guide the methodology of this study. Additionally, I will explain the nature of the study, and provide definitions of key terms. I will discuss the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, the significance of potential contributions as a result of the findings of this study and conclude with a summary of the sections of Chapter 1.

Background

Many children experience adversities, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which may delay their emotional, behavioral, and academic growth (Alexander, 2019). Gardner and Stephens-Pisecco (2019) illustrated the importance of resilience and the critical roles that educators play in promoting the healthy physical, cognitive, and psychological development of children from low-income backgrounds who have experienced ACEs. Masten (2021) defined resilience as a student's capacity to successfully adapt to adversities in multiple environments that threaten the development, function, or survival of the student. Ye et al. (2021) further explained resilience by focusing on educational resilience, which refers to the student's ability to perform at high levels academically despite coming from challenging experiences and adverse backgrounds. The lack of academic resilience may be one of the many contributing factors causing low student academic achievement (Frazier et al., 2019). Poultney and Forbes (2020) found teacher practices can promote resilience, serving as a protective factor which contributes to student academic success. According to the 2019 Rural School Community Trust report, student academic achievement is lower in rural areas of the nation (Showalter et al., 2019). To respond to students needs in overcoming adversity, trauma informed educational policies and academic intervention programs designed to support students have been put into place throughout school districts in the United States (Frankland, 2021). The Department of Education in the state where this study was prompted, has provided statewide professional development for teachers in rural areas to promote educational resilience and student achievement (Redacted

Department of Education, 2017, 2019, 2020). The Department of Education supported professional development throughout the state for educators teaching in low performing districts to ameliorate ACEs and build the academic resilience of students (Smith, 2019).

Problem Statement

The problem that prompted my interest in conducting this basic qualitative study was the low levels of academic success of primary grade students attending one rural educational site in the southern region of the United States, which could be caused by many factors including low academic resilience (see Post et al., 2020; see Poultney & Forbes, 2020; see Scott et al., 2020; see Wall, 2021). The research problem was that little was known about how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. This study was important because researchers found that educators can promote academic success of students by influencing the development of their educational resilience (Frazier et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2021).

Standardized test scores from the last five years provided data which revealed students attending rural schools located in the southern region of the United States perform lower than their non rural peers (Redacted Department of Education, 2017; Redacted Department of Education, 2019; Redacted Department of Education, 2020). At the local level, rural students regularly performed lower than their nonrural peers in surrounding counties of the same educational district. When comparing the state standardized testing scores of rural and nonrural students, more rural students scored as

beginning or developing learners, placing them in the lowest two achievement levels in Mathematics (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparison of Rural and Nonrural Students State Standardized Test Mathematics Scores in the Two Lowest Achievement Levels

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
*Rural School 1	55.7%	55.4%	56.1%	-	63.1%
Rural School 2	61.7%	64.3%	49.2%	-	67.8%
Rural School 3	62.0%	50.0%	39.4%	-	42.1%
Nonrural School 1	37.1%	31.5%	34.9%	-	50.0%
Nonrural School 2	32.7%	29.5%	25.4%	-	39.2%
Nonrural School 3	22.7%	25.3%	20.9%	-	31.8%

Note. No data was available for 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures.

* *Indicates Study School*

The likelihood of scoring in the lowest two achievement levels increased for all students in English Language Arts. However, rural students still performed lower than their nonrural peers (see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparison of Rural and Nonrural Students State Standardized Test English Language Arts Scores in the Two Lowest Achievement Levels

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
*Rural School 1	66.2%	73.7%	72.0%	-	76.4%
Rural School 2	70.0%	68.6%	60.3%	-	66.2%
Rural School 3	75.9%	75.0%	51.5%	-	57.9%
Nonrural School 1	46.6%	53.3%	39.6%	-	42.9%
Nonrural School 2	44.2%	37.2%	33.3%	-	48.3%
Nonrural School 3	30.7%	33.8%	24.1%	-	34.9%

Note. No data was available for 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures.

** Indicates Study School*

Academic resilience is a student's ability to perform high educationally, in spite of a disadvantaged background (Ye et al., 2021). Frazier et al. (2019) found that one of the many possible causes of low student academic achievement may be their lack of academic resilience. According to researchers, educators can foster resilience through meaningful learning experiences and supportive relationships to make a difference in the academic success of students (Post et al., 2020; Poultney & Forbes, 2020; Scott et al., 2020; Search Institute, 2018; Wall, 2021). Masten (2018) suggested that the individual resilience of a students can contribute to more productive and successful experiences in education and life in general. At the Department of Education in the state where this study was prompted, directors encouraged underperforming districts to provide professional development on aversive childhood events (ACEs) and the growth mindset to help develop resilience in students in low performing rural schools (Frankland, 2021; Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019; Redacted Department of Education, 2018; Redacted Department of Education, 2021; Redacted Department of Education, 2022). At the local level and beyond, primary grade teachers' perspectives on influences of student resilience are unknown and unexplored and further research is recommended (Robbins et al., 2018). Therefore, the research problem addressed by this basic qualitative study was how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience located in the southern region of the United States is unknown. Understanding how educators perceive resilience and the resilience of their

students may lead to professional development which can enhanced teaching practices, allowing teachers to help their students develop and strengthen their individual resilience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. Ye et al. (2021) explained educational resilience refers to the ability of a student to perform highly academically despite having a disadvantaged background. There has been an increase in trauma informed educational policies and academic interventions designed to promote educational resilience and academic achievement for children that have endured ACEs (Cantor et al., 2018). However, research has neglected to adequately acknowledge the policies and interventions that support the development of resilience in rural students (Frankland, 2021). Gardner and Stephens-Pisecco (2019) illustrated the importance of resilience, and the critical role educators play in promoting the healthy development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Researchers have determined that resilience is a critical noncognitive factor, or soft skill, that allows children to overcome adversity and promotes academic achievement (Buzzetto-Hollywood & Mitchell, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019; Masten, 2018). According to researchers, educators can foster resilience through meaningful learning experiences and supportive relationships (Wall, 2021; Scott et al., 2020; Post et al., 2020; Poultney & Forbes, 2020). However, additional research is needed to determine how teachers develop resilience and promote the academic success of their rural primary grade students (Guo et al., 2020). This gap in research suggested that studies were needed to

explore primary educators' understanding of resilience, their perspectives of student resilience, and how resilience affects academic performance. As the researcher of this study, I interviewed primary grade teachers to explore their perspectives on resilience and how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. With the use of an interview protocol, I explored volunteer participants' perspectives on the influence of educational resilience on the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools. The findings of this study will potentially promote social change by heightening teachers' awareness and aiding in the identification of students who are experiencing academic adversities, enabling teachers to respond to resilient and non-resilient children in a proactive and supportive manner that will promote meaningful learning experiences, educational resilience, and academic success.

Research Question

One research question (RQ) will guide this study:

RQ1: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience?

Conceptual Framework

The framework that guided this basic qualitative study with interviews was a combination of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989) ecological systems theory and Masten's (2001) theory of resilience. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child's growth and development is directly influenced by the early experiences and interactions within a child's microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. Individual resilience requires the

ability to adapt to experiences and adversities, which can encourage a more prosperous life in all aspects (Masten, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems consist of the microsystem which involves individuals and experiences within a child's intimate environments, which includes the child's home and immediate caregivers. Any ACEs occurring in a child's microsystem may affect the child's healthy development, adult life, and be passed down for generations. The mesosystem extends to relationships and experiences in the child's learning environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Positive relationships with educators can be pivotal for students needing to develop self-regulation and resiliency (Post et al., 2020). The exosystem further expands to include the community in which the child lives. Positive relationships in all levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems can encourage the development of educational resilience in a child.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was to explore how teachers promoted the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. A basic qualitative design with interviews was the most rationale selection for my study. Qualitative research attempts to understand individuals, events, groups, and other phenomena in a naturalistic environment (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) or real world settings (Burkholder et al., 2016). According to Smith (2020), qualitative research is derived from information and data collected from those who have experienced the phenomena firsthand. The use of purposeful sampling guided the participant selection process by identifying participants with firsthand experiences who provided information

rich accounts of the phenomena (see Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; see Patton, 2002).

The research question for this study was framed by the conceptual framework and current research in the field. The utilization of interviews created two way communication between the interviewee and myself (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data collected during the interview process provided fully detailed descriptions and perspectives of individuals' experiences of the phenomena being investigated (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Interviews were conducted with primary grade educators, serving in the role of teachers with three or more years of experience working with rural primary grade students and who had professional learning opportunities regarding student resilience in the southern region of the United States. Interview questions were designed to explore each participant's unique perceptions and understandings on the influence of educational resilience on the academic success of primary grade students. With respect to the global pandemic and physical distancing, I felt social media, publicly available emails, and snowballing were the most appropriate way to recruit volunteers for this study. Data collected during the interview process was audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by me. I did not use data analysis software. Thematic analysis was used to understand how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience.

Definitions

To better understand the research on educational resilience and its potential influence on student success, the following definitions of key concepts or constructs have been provided:

Academic achievement: Madigan and Curran (2020) defined academic achievement as the ability to perform well on tests, exams, and specific academic tasks that are numerically scored (graded) allowing educators to evaluate student competencies regarding precise learning objectives.

Academic success: York and Gibson (2015) described academic success as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies that result in academic achievement.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (2018) defined ACEs as any form of trauma or chronic stress experienced during childhood that can potentially have a short- or long-term impact on a child's healthy development and general wellbeing.

Educational resilience: Wang et al. (1997) defined educational resilience as the ability of students to experience successful educational outcomes despite encountering adverse environmental or personal experiences.

Fixed mindset: Dweck (1999) defined a fixed mindset as the belief that intellectual abilities and personal characteristics are unchangeable and therefore fixed.

Growth mindset: Dweck (1999) defined a growth mindset as the belief that intellectual abilities and personal characteristics can be developed or grown.

Noncognitive factors: Johri and Misra (2017) defined noncognitive factors as important skills that are actively involved in the betterment of students.

Non-rural: Health Resources and Services Administration (2021) defined nonrural as urbanized areas (UAs) having a population of 50,000 or more, as deemed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Problem solving skills: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Office of Digital Learning (n.d.) defined problem solving skills as the skills necessary to identify and process a problem, develop possible and plausible solutions, and take the necessary and appropriate course of action.

Protective factors: O'Connell et al., (2009) defined protective factors as biological, psychological characteristics and characteristics of the ecological systems that are associated with a lower possibility of problematic outcomes or lessen the effect of a potential risk factor.

Resilience: Masten (2021) defined resilience as a student's capacity to successfully adapt to adversities in multiple environments that threaten the development, function, or survival of the student.

Rural: Health Resources and Services Administration (2021) defined rural as all nonmetro counties and all metro census tracts with Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes 4-10 or 2-3 having a population density of 35 or less per square mile.

Social competence: According to Punyanunt-Carter (2021), social competence is the ability to react to social, public, or interpersonal situations, that may involve

employing empathetic skills, respecting the perspectives of others, and adapting to meet the expressed or implied needs of other in an appropriate manner.

Tenacious: According to Duckworth et al. (2007) tenacious individuals express extreme desire, internal motivation, and consistent effort to navigate adverse situations.

Assumptions

For this qualitative research study with interviews, I had three assumptions based on my experiences and beliefs as an early childhood educator that are critical to the meaningfulness of my study but cannot be demonstrated. First, I assumed the study participants were primary grade educators working in rural areas located in the southern region of the United States. Secondly, I assumed that participants answered each interview question honestly based on their unique personal experiences and perspectives of primary grade educators regarding the influence of educational resilience on the academic success of primary grade students. Lastly, I assumed that the interview questions elicited meaningful data, which was collected and analyzed to fully answer the research question.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study consisted of primary grade educators teaching primary grade students in rural schools located in the southern region of the United States. The focus of the study was how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. The participant boundaries of this basic qualitative study with interviews included primary grade (kindergarten to third grade [K-3]) teachers with three or more years of experience, have had professional

learning opportunities regarding student resilience and are currently working in a rural school located in the southern region of the United States. Potential transferability of this study will be ultimately determined by the readers and their contexts (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Social media and publicly available emails with snowballing was utilized to recruit volunteer participants and snowballing was used as needed. Delimitations of my study included teachers with fewer than three years of teaching experience in a primary grade setting. Additionally, educators not located in a rural area in the southern region of the United States were excluded. The delimitations of this study confined the potential transferability of the results to only consist of the uniquely identified participant population of primary grade educators currently working in a rural location of the southern region of the United States.

Limitations

This study was limited to primary grade educators who are teachers working with K-2 students in a rural location in the southern region of the United States for three or more years and have had professional learning opportunities regarding student resilience. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure the participants selected have personal experiences and understandings of the phenomenon being investigated (see Yeong, et al., 2018). The findings of this study represented a fraction of rural primary grade educators' perspectives and may not be generalized to represent the perspectives of primary grade educators teaching in other rural regions of the United States. However, these limitations are necessary to answer the research question.

Significance

According to Masten (2018), individual resilience can contribute to more successful and productive experiences in all areas of life. Additionally, students who perform highly academically despite having disadvantaged backgrounds are described as being educationally resilient (Ye et al., 2021). However, living in a rural area is a risk factor for low resilience (Armfield et al., 2021), and rural children are at greater risk of experiencing negative outcomes during their lives (Sacks & Murphy, 2018). According to Frankland (2021), there is an abundance of research exploring the social emotional needs of children and trauma informed practices in nonrural schools. According to Frankland (2021), the social emotional needs and trauma informed practices that provide support for rural children have been neglected by research, creating a gap in practice. Post et al. (2020) suggested more studies are needed that explore teachers' perceptions of the influence of trauma informed environments on the academic success and educational resilience of primary grade students. Frankland (2021) recommended additional research on what helps rural school children develop the resilience to overcome adversities and achieve other positive outcomes. Masten et al. (2021) suggested that additional resilience research that considers educators' observational perspectives of resilience as an important new direction of resilience research that needs to be explored. Therefore, I explored primary grade teachers' perspectives of how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience to contribute to the gap in practice and advance educational policies. The implications of this basic qualitative study with interviews included the potential to promote positive social change

by heightening K-3 educators' awareness about the importance of educational resilience, and ways to support the development of educational resilience in students who were experiencing academic adversities.

Summary

This study addresses the low academic success of primary grade students attending rural schools located in the southern region of the United States. This study addresses resilience as a protective factor that mitigates against the risk of low academic achievement among primary grade students in rural southern regions of the United States. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. The framework that guided this study is based on the combined theories of Bronfenbrenner and Masten, specifically Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989) ecological systems theory and Masten's (2001) theory of resilience. The conceptual framework guided the development of one research question that focuses on how primary grade teachers in rural schools perceive, define, and describe educational resilience. Exploring the perceptions of primary grade educators provided insight that could be used to understand and heighten teachers' awareness levels about the importance of educational resilience to support students who are experiencing adversities. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review that includes strategies used when searching for scholarly literature, an explanation of the conceptual framework and its components, and an extensive review of current peer-reviewed journals.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that prompted this qualitative study was the low academic success of primary grade students attending rural schools located in the southern region of the United States. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. This study sought to meet the existing gap in practice and gain a deeper understanding of how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. Major sections of Chapter 2 include the literature search strategy used to collect evidence supporting the relevance of problem within current literature. The library databases and search engines and key terms will also be presented. A synthesis of the conceptual framework and literature reviews related to key variables and concepts will also be discussed in Chapter 2.

Literature Search Strategy

During this study, I have performed exhaustive searches for scholarly peer reviewed research-based literature. These searches have required the use of multiple library databases and search engines including the Walden library databases, Education Source, ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar and ProQuest. The literary search terms used to accumulate information for this study include: *adversity, resilience, educational resilience, adaptive systems, protective factors, at risk factors, at risk students, academic success, academic achievement, achievement gap, low academic performance, standardized test, rural, vulnerability, early childhood education, educational setting,*

primary grades, primary children, primary school, grit, perseverance, consistency, foundational skills, and urban vs. rural. The search terms used to construct the conceptual framework for this study include the following: *adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), poverty, mindset, growth mindset, soft skills, noncognitive skills, self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-regulation, resilience theory, trauma informed school practices, social emotional competence, social emotional development, and teacher-student relationships.* These search terms were used independently and in various combinations.

Conceptual Framework

This study explored how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of resilience. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological systems and Masten's (2018) theory of resilience are combined to create a conceptual framework that guided the research question that addressed this study's problem and purpose and guided this study's methodological approach. The commonalities that tie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of development and Masten's (2018) theory of resilience provide a guideline for developing interview questions, conducting interviews, collecting data, and analysis of data. Throughout the ecological systems, positive relationships can be found with families, educators, and community members that encourage the development of social competence, protective factors, and problem-solving skills that lead to the development of educational resilience (Abelev, 2009; Masten & Obradovic, 2008).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that children's early experiences and interactions within their environmental systems influence their transitions through life and into adulthood. Sturman and Zappala-Piemme (2017) explained that students who lack resilience during their early childhood years will suffer in adulthood, and positive student mindsets are critical to the development of resilience and potential future success (Erikson, 1963; Keown & Bourke, 2019). In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems, the microsystem involves individuals and experiences encountered in the child's most intimate environment, such as those with family members. The mesosystem includes the microsystem and extends to relationships and experiences within the child's learning environment. Educators who form meaningful relationships with students by offering support, safety, and consistency are instrumental in helping students learn to self-regulate and develop resiliency (Post et al., 2020). Finally, the exosystem includes all previous systems and expands to include the child's community. According to Masten and Motti-Stefanidi (2020), factors experienced within one's ecological set of systems can pose benefits and barriers and can promote or impede the influences on additional ecological systems. This may result in multilevel threats (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). Children living in rural communities may encounter more barriers that result in ACEs than their nonrural peers, placing them at greater academic risk (McHenry-Sorber, 2019).

Masten's Theory of Resilience

Masten (2018) found that individual resilience can contribute to more productive and successful educational and life experiences due to the ability to adapt to adversities.

According to Masten (2021), ACEs occurring within a child's microsystem may affect the child's healthy development throughout life and be transferred to descending generations. Concepts of Masten's (2001) theory of resilience include a child's ability to adapt to change, embrace challenges, remain tenacious, work to develop and improve skills, and persevere when faced with adversity, along with how children respond to the success of others, self regulate, self efficacy, displays social competence, and build friendships. Children who develop resilience are more likely to do the following: embrace challenges, be inspired by the success of others, remain tenacious when faced with both academic and non-academic adversities, and exert additional effort to improve current skills (Masten, 2018).

Masten (2018) explained that developing resilience can shape human adaptations throughout life and developing academic resilience as a child may lead to self-regulated learning. Researchers found that individual resilience can contribute to a more productive and successful educational and life experiences due to the ability to adapt to adversities (Masten, 2018). The ability to develop resilience, adapt, and overcome adversity is embedded throughout each principle of the growth mindsets, researchers are calling for the integration of resilience research in education to advance knowledge and improve current applications (Masten, 2018). Masten (2021) suggested an important new direction of resilience research that focuses on observations and considers resilience perspectives is needed.

Previous Research

Ahmed et al. (2020) explored a range of theoretical models of resilience and human development that incorporated classic and contemporary conceptual components, of resilience, including the research of Bronfenbrenner and Masten, to understand how it has evolved over time and how it is understood today. After careful review of scholarly resilience literature, Ahmed et al. (2020) proposed the dynamic and interactive model of resilience (DIMoR) based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems. According to Ahmed et al., (2020) DIMoR is a means of understanding resilience in a range of educational contexts through action competence projects that demanded openness which weres reported to have the possible risk of diminishing the self esteem of individuals. Unlike Masten (1994), who proposed that anyone could develop and increase resilience levels, Ahmed et al. (2020) described resilience as an intrinsic trait or ability which some people possessed at more teachable levels.

Ramirez-Granizo et al. (2020) compared the resilience levels of students who played sports and of students who did not, as perceived by their parents. According to Ramirez-Granizo et al (2020), there is a positive correlation between student sports participation and resilience levels, which offers support that resilience is adaptable and can be fostered (Masten, 2001). Ramirez-Granizo et al (2020) recommended further research should be conducted to find additional ways to promote student engagement in sports due to a reported increase of resilience, and how participation in sports may affect the resilience levels of various socioeconomic statuses including those at risk. The

personal level relationships, such as those found between members of a team resonates within Bronfenbrenner's ecological microsystem.

Diab et al. (2018) studied how the roles within a child's microsystems (school & family) and intrinsic characteristics may serve as academic achievement protective factors. Researchers found that positive relationships with peers, parents, and teachers along with internal motivation minimized the impacts of ACEs on academic achievement (Diab et al., 2018). Diab et al. (2018) incorporated Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Masten's resilience theory to explore the direct effect that relationships within a child's microsystems bears on the development of a child's level of resilience and potential of positive outcomes when faced with extreme adversities within the child's ecological system. The need for interventions tailored to specifically meet the needs of children living war zones that incorporate parents and teachers was recommended by Diab et al. (2018). The combination of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Masten's resilience theory have been utilized by researchers (Diab et al., 2018) to explore and investigate the relationships and correlations between microsystems, such as those experienced between educators and students (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), and the development of resilience (Masten & Tellegen, 2012).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

In the literature review section, I presented the current literature related to the key concepts and variables of this study. A child's environment consists of overlapping layers among the ecological systems; each system supports the child's unique opportunities for the development of resilience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I chose to develop my review of

the literature based on teacher practices. The literature I found to support my study revealed the development of resilience in students within their homes, at school, and in the community, including the influence of a growth mindset, positive relationships, teacher warmth, and cognitive responsiveness (see Holmes et al., 2019). Rural school environments (Strong, 2018), student academic outcomes, and adaptive systems will be reviewed as components of a rural student's environmental systems with the potential to promote the development of resilience. Components of resilience that serve as protective factors will also be included in my review including self efficacy, self regulation, and social competence (Masten, 2001). The educational outcomes of students involve positive outcomes such as their academic success, and negative outcomes such as risk factors and ACE's (see Dalziel et al., 2019).

Teacher Practices Promoting Resilience

According to researchers, teacher practices can serve as a protective factor and support the development of resilience and academic success in students (Poultney & Forbes, 2020). These teacher practices include the encouragement of a growth mindset (Baldwin et al., 2020; Burnette et al., 2018; Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019; Sattler & Gershoff, 2019), positive teacher student relationships (Blewitt et al., 2020; Cadima et al., 2020; Holmes et al.; 2018; Lipscomb et al., 2019; Schmitt et al., 2018), warmth (Monopoli et al., 2020; Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020), and cognitive responsiveness (Armfield et al., 2021; Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). Poultney and Forbes (2020) described how resilience can be developed through strong teacher practices such as strength based educational programs and spontaneous teachable moments. Researchers discovered that

educators, who purposefully integrated resilience-based principles into their daily teaching practices, strived to create a positive learning environment for teaching and learning (Poultney & Forbes, 2020).

Growth Mindset

Many researchers have investigated the connection between a growth mindset, resilience, and academic success (Baldwin et al., 2020; Burnette et al., 2018; Dweck, 2007; Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019). Turnaround for Children (2019) released a framework that added self-efficacy, sense of belonging, social competence, healthy attachments, and self-regulation to that set of mindsets that predicted the academic success of students. The seminal research of Dweck (2007) explained that individuals with a growth mindset believe their abilities can be developed and they are then more willing to accept challenges, work diligently, and recognize personal weaknesses and take actions to strengthen them. Character traits such as working smarter and being a hard worker are noncognitive factors that contribute to the academic success of students (Johri & Misra, 2017). Burnette et al. (2018) investigated whether an online growth mindset intervention could be utilized to promote academic success. Baldwin et al. (2020) discussed the importance of students developing learning mindsets, which consist mainly of the growth mindsets, including belonging and resilience. Students who have encountered ACEs benefited from early resilience and mindset interventions (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019). Mindset researchers found that students that participated in growth mindset interventions performed better academically, and that low-income students showed more growth than their middle-class and wealthier peers (Baldwin et al.,

2020). With many critical developmental periods occur early in life; researchers recommend further research explore how the growth mindset component of resilience differs throughout various developmental stages (Sattler & Gershoff, 2019). According to the seminal work of Masten and Obradovic (2008), characteristics of resilience include the ability of the student to adapt to situations, embrace challenges, remain tenacious, persevere, work to develop and improve skills, and positive responses to the success of others are critical components of a positive growth mindset. Researchers recommended that teacher who incorporate resilience-building strategies within their learning environments encourage positive educational outcomes for students (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019).

Positive Teacher and Student Relationships

Schmitt et al. (2018) determined that close teacher-student relationships served as a protective factor for kindergarten children and decreased behavioral incidents in the learning environment. Lipscomb et al. (2019) explained that individual levels of resilience can be developed through positive relationships that offer support, safety, and responsive interactions. Holmes et al. (2018) suggested it is imperative for the healthy development of young children who have endured traumatic experiences to form secure attachments and positive relationships with caregivers and education professionals. Researchers evaluated the quality of teacher-student relationships and how these relationships promote positive social emotional development in young students (Blewitt et al., 2020). Blewitt et al. (2020) supported Bronfenbrenner's theory that positive teacher-child interactions within the educational setting can cultivate healthy

relationships. Cadima et al., (2020) found when at risk students develop healthy and supportive relationships with their teachers, the ability of the students to develop self regulation skills increases. When encountering ACEs, children who have developed positive relationships are more resilient (Cantor et al., 2018; Osher et al., 2018; Search Institute, 2018). Post et al. (2020), explored the perspectives of educators working in educational environments with high poverty and low student achievement and found that teachers felt that developing positive relationships was critical in building student resilience. McKinnon et al. (2018) explored the connection between low-income primary children that changed schools often and the relationships they experienced with their teachers. According to McKinnon et al. (2018), children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to form positive relationships with their teachers.

Warmth

Researchers believe that the level of warmth within a relationship may serve as a protective factor for at risk children (Monopoli et al., 2020; Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk, 2020; Yule et al., 2019). According to researchers, the level of relationship warmth displayed may influence the development of resilience in at risk students (Monopoli et al., 2020; Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk, 2020). Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk (2020) found attitude control and level of warmth to be the two most significant factors contributing to the emotional self efficacy and resilience in children after being exposed to traumas. Yule et al. (2019) extended previous studies by examining the relationship between specific emotional socialization behaviors and parental warmth with adaptive functioning in children. According to Yule et al. (2019), after a child experiences adversity, there is a

significant correlation between emotional socialization behaviors and adaptive functions. Warm parental relationships facilitated positive caregiver relationships and adaptive functioning (Yule et al., 2019).

Cognitive Responsiveness

Several researchers have found that teachers who are cognitive responsive will be more likely to identify and support the development of resilience in all students – those who may have and those who may have not experienced ACE's (Armfield et al., 2021; Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). Armfield et al. (2021) explained their study focused on children who had experienced substantiated maltreatment and children without substantiated concerns of maltreatment but those who may be experiencing adversities. According to Blodgett and Lanigan (2018), many children experiencing multiple ACEs may experience lack of academic success, however, they may not meet the diagnostic requirements for most interventions so are at risk of falling through the cracks. Teachers must be proactively and cognitively responsive to the needs of all their students (Armfield et al., 2021; Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Lanigan, 2018).

Rural School Environment

According to Dalziel et al. (2019) positive educational outcomes require educators to nurture their students' sense of belongingness and safety in their educational environment. Teaching rural school students, who have experienced ACE's in their lives, can present unique challenges for educators (Cantor et al., 2018). A community of practice provides additional support and resources for educators facing these unique challenges (Bates & Morgan, 2018). According to Azano and Biddle (2019), the overall

needs of people living in rural communities and serving local schools have been neglected due to geographical location and lack of resources.

Student Academic Outcomes

Researchers have investigated both positive and negative academic outcomes experienced by students at various educational stages. Academic resilience may contribute to the positive learning outcomes of at risk students (Rudd et al., 2021). Students experience negative academic outcomes due to individual or social factors that increase the odds of adverse outcomes (Garmezy & Masten, 1986). Researchers have found connections between the academic success of students and resilience (Garmezy & Masten, 1986; Sattler and Gershoff, 2019; Skinner & Saxton, 2019). Sattler and Gershoff (2019) investigated various thresholds of resilience among children living in poverty and not in poverty and found that upon school entry children not living in poverty were associated with academic success throughout elementary school. Researchers found that impoverished children who entered kindergarten with a higher resilience threshold scored similarly to their non-poverty peers academically (Sattler & Gershoff, 2019). Skinner and Saxton (2019) found that when students develop academic coping and experience academic success, they have improved levels of academic resilience, perseverance, and productive persistence.

Sacks and Murphy (2018) found that rural children are at a greater risk of experiencing negative outcomes throughout their lifespan. According to Raymond et al., (2018) there is an elevated risk of negative outcomes for individuals with disadvantages. Carr et al. (2018) conducted a review of international literature that showed a connection

between adversity and maltreatment, and long-term negative physical and mental health outcomes. Positive educational environments help to build a sense of community among educators and students, helping students who have experienced ACE's develop protective factors that foster resilience (Cantor et al., 2018). Students attending schools with positive social emotional climates that promote physical and emotional safety are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and purpose (Leonard & Gudiño, 2021). Students with academic resilience appeared to display an improved sense of belonging and increase academic performance (Poultney & Forbes, 2020).

Adaptive Support Systems

Adaptive systems include an individuals' belief systems and support systems (McGee et al., 2020). According to McGee et al. (2020), belief systems are comprised of religious and general life beliefs, and spirituality. An individual's adaptive system includes social support systems that help the individual cultivate resilience (McGee et al., 2020). Positive relationships that can be found within one's ecological levels include family members, educators, religious practitioners, and other influential members of the community. Relationships support an individuals' adaptive system and can promote the development of social competence, problem solving skills, and resilience (Abelev, 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Masten & Obradovic, 2008). Adaptive systems can be found throughout ecological levels with educators, families, religious affiliations, and members of a community fostering social competence, problem solving, and positive relationships which may lead to the development of resilience (Abelev, 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Masten & Obradovic, 2008; and McGee et al., 2020). Scott et al. (2020) explored the

planning and implementation of a community school partnership, serving as an adaptive system that mobilized assets to promote student success and community engagement.

Peer relationships such as those fostered through extracurricular team sports may serve as an adaptive system due to the comradery shared by the participants. Ramirez-Granizo et al (2020) compared the resilience levels of students who played sports and of students who did not, as perceived by their parents. According to Ramirez-Granizo et al (2020), there is a positive correlation between student sports participation and resilience levels.

These social support systems include belief systems comprised of religious and general life beliefs and spirituality that cultivate resilience (McGee et al., 2020). Diab et al. (2018) studied how the factors within a child's adaptive systems (school, family, and beliefs) and intrinsic characteristics may serve as academic achievement protective factors. Researchers found that positive relationships within the child's ecological and adaptive systems can minimize the negative influences of ACEs on academic achievement (Diab et al., 2018), and lead to the development of positive adaptive behaviors, and increase social competence (Coulombe & Yates, 2018).

Resilience as a Protective Factor

According to Masten (1994), protective factors involve strategies, relationships, or situations that reduce the negative effect of adverse events and promote individuals' competencies and healthy outcomes. Protective factors experienced early in life via the social support of family and friends, along with a sense of purpose, promote resilience evident in later developmental periods (McEwen, 2019). Researchers have determined protective factors include close relationships, social support, sense of belonging, self

regulation, mastery motivation, motivation to adapt, purpose, and positive family views (Masten et al., 2021; McLaughlin et al. 2020; Turnaround for Children, 2019; Yule et al., 2019). Protective factors cross the boundaries of ecological systems including individual children, their families, schools, communities, and cultural systems (Fritz et al., 2018; Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). Bowers and Yehuda (2020) found that protective factors may be transmitted from generation to generation. Schaefer et al. (2018) examined protective factors that are linked to the resilience of individuals who have experienced trauma and adversity. Protective factors such as positive relationships, an optimistic attitude, a growth mindset, and positive religious values were found to contribute to positive outcomes while mitigating lasting negative effects of trauma or adversity (Schaefer et al., 2018). According to Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018), educators wishing to promote student achievement and support the development of resilience must consider a whole child approach and foster cognitive, physical, social emotional and academic developments.

Lipscomb et al. (2020) explored the views of teachers on the connection between primary grade students who have experienced ACEs and school engagement. In the study by Lipscomb et al., teachers identified the social skills of students that appeared to be unrelated to ACEs, which included empathy, communication, and cooperation. Researchers found that teachers who identified both areas of developmental concern in their students and areas that appeared unaffected, were able to use the skills of a student such as empathy, communication, and cooperation to help them build resilience (Lipscomb et al., 2020). Researchers determined that levels of empathy, communication,

and cooperation could indicate the development of protective factors in students. According to researchers, positive social skills are associated with higher levels of resilience in children (Lipscomb et al., 2020; Monopoli et al., 2020). Social skills may potentially serve as strengths in the abilities of students to build positive relationships with others, which is a key component in the development of resilience (Lipscomb et al., 2020; Schaefer et al., 2018). Skills such as self efficacy, self regulation and social competence are essential to navigating adversities, overall success, building friendships, and developing resilience (Masten 2001, Monopoli et al., 2020; Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020). Researchers have suggested that social skills may serve as protective factors for children (Masten, 2001; Monopoli et al., 2020).

Self Efficacy

Several researchers have explored the importance of self efficacy within the learning environment (Emelianova, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019; Sturman & Zappala-Piemme, 2017) and as a predictor of resilience (Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020). A child's self efficacy can be influenced by feelings of isolation, exclusion, and rejection experienced within a child's learning environment, which creates a lack of belongingness that can contribute to negative learning outcomes (Emelianova, 2019). Students who reported having lower self efficacy scored lower academically than their peers who believed they could be academically successful (Frazier et al., 2019). Sturman and Zappala-Piemme (2017) found that when participants completed self efficacy and test anxiety measurements, there was a significant correlation with efficacy (as it is related to self regulated learning) and test anxiety (as it is related to low self esteem). According to

Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk (2020) there is a positive correlation between self efficacy and resilience, making self efficacy a key predictor of resilience. Frazier et al. (2019) determined that resilience and self efficacy correlate with higher grade point averages (GPA) (Frazier et al., 2019). Resilience, coping skills, and self-efficacy are all characteristics promoted by teachers who nurture the cognitive and noncognitive skill sets of their students; and researchers of this study recommend more studies are needed (Frazier et al., 2019).

Self Regulation

Several researchers have examined the relationship between self regulation and resilience (Distefano et al., 2021; Lipscomb et al., 2019; Masten, 2018; Sturman & Zappala-Piemme, 2017; Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020; Wall, 2021). The early stages of early childhood development provide an optimal opportunity to strengthen children's abilities to self-regulate (Lipscomb et al., 2019). Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk (2020) explained self regulation based on perceptions, experiences, and emotions are factors that encourage the development of resilience within one's environment. Distefano et al. (2021) examined the physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of self regulation to determine which were more important in the academic success of young at risk learners. Researchers found that lower levels of self regulation and social competence were associated with higher levels of impulsivity (Distefano et al., 2021). Masten (2018) found children who develop resilience are more likely to practice self regulated learning. Wall (2021) found that when educators helped children who had experienced trauma learn to self regulate their personal resilience and odds of healthy

developmental outcomes increased. Further research is needed to explore the unique effects of self regulation and resilience on academic success (Distefano et al., 2021).

Social Competence

Researchers have explored the relationship between social competence, resilience, and academic success (Lafavor, 2018; Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020). One of the personal traits that is indicative of high resilience is social competence (Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020). Lafavor (2018) examined the social competence, effort and emotional control associated with adaptive processes of 86 children living in emergency homeless shelters. Researchers found that the social and emotional processes associated with social competence were potentially important predictors of academic success and resilience in significantly disadvantaged children and children who have encountering one or more ACEs (Lafavor, 2018).

Negative Student Outcomes

Several researchers have studied poor academic performance and the link with lower levels of resilience in students (Armfield et al., 2021; Monopoli et al., 2020; Sacks & Murphy, 2018). Researchers found that resilience literature suggests that resilience is lowest among the poor and studies have been concentrated in specific geographical regions (Barrett et al., 2021). According to Armfield et al. (2021) risk factors of lower resilience included living in a rural area, having a physical, sensory, or learning disability, and being male.

Risk Factors

Risk factors increase the possibility of negative outcomes (Raymond et al., 2018). Risk factors such as victimization, anxiety, that may affect a child's academic success, educational resilience, and increase the possibility of negative life outcomes (Monopoli et al., 2020). Sacks and Murphy (2018) found that rural children have an increased risk of experiencing negative outcomes, including negative educational outcomes due to a prevalence of ACE's.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Several researchers have examined the effect of ACE's, also referred to as traumatic experiences, on the educational success and resilience of children (Alexander, 2019; Armfield et al., 2021; Barrett et al., 2021; Cromartie et al., 2020; Lafavor, 2018; McHenry-Sorber, 2019; Monopoli et al., 2020; Sacks & Murphy, 2018). According to Jones et al. (2018), due to the prevalence of ACEs and the impact on academic success, research is needed to explore ways to meet the needs of children who have experienced ACEs. Bowers and Yehuda (2020) found that ACEs may have life altering effects on the development of a child. McHenry-Sorber (2019) found that rural children are more likely to encounter ACE's and over 5% more likely to endure poverty than their non rural peers. According to the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (2018), by the age of 17, 29% of rural children have encountered two or more ACEs. Ecological factors, including poverty, can increase the challenges of teaching students affected by ACEs (Showalter et al., 2019). Children living in rural areas are more likely to encounter ACEs (McHenry-Sorber, 2019) and impoverished conditions (Cromartie et

al., 2020). Lafavor (2018) suggested additional research is needed to better understand how ACE's affect the development of children and identify ways to promote resilience. Traumatic childhood experiences can potentially bring about cognitive delays, learning difficulties, and sensory difficulties (Alexander, 2019). Higher absenteeism, lower achievement tests scores, and increased likelihood of receiving special education services are characteristics of children who have been exposed to traumatic events (Alexander, 2019). Armfield et al. (2021) investigated the correlation between child maltreatment and educational resilience of male and female children entering a formal education environment.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I provided an extensive literature review. I identified the literature search strategy, including the library databases and search engines used, provided key search terms, and described the iterative search process. The conceptual framework for this study provided the underpinning for exploring how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. Current and seminal literature related to the resilience of children including protective factors such as social skills, adaptive systems, and teacher practices; and risk factors such as ACEs, along with the positive and negative outcomes associated with resilience factors. In Chapter 3, I will present the research design and rationale, questions, the role of the researcher, and methodology. I will present the procedures for participant selection, recruitment, participation, and data collection.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. In Chapter 3, I will describe the research design and rationale and the role of the researcher. I will also present the methodology, participant selection criteria, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Trustworthiness and ethical procedures will also be examined. A summary will be found at the end of the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

For this basic qualitative study, I explored how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. The rationale was to better understand the educators' perspectives of resilience. The research question that this study sought to answer was:

RQ1: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience?

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and Masten's (2001) theory of resilience are combined to form the conceptual framework for this study. The problem and purpose of this study was supported by, and explored using, the research question. The research question was designed to gain valuable insight of how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience.

The central concept of this study involved how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students by developing their resilience. The teachers of primary grade students attending a rural school in the southern region of the United States voluntarily participated in this study. To best answer the research question of this basic qualitative study, interviews were conducted. Interviews are often used in qualitative studies because they can provide the researcher with unique individualized information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data that was collected by following an interview protocol to conduct interviews with educators who have worked with primary grade students in the rural southern United States. Qualitative interviews allow researchers to gain specific insight of the interviewee's experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via telephone or videoconferencing with the use of Zoom, and member checking the summary of findings was conducted via email. The use of videoconferencing, such as Zoom meetings, for qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to observe nonverbal cues, generate authentic real time conversation, and connect with the study's participants and is a viable alternative to conventional in person interviews, (Irani, 2018). Qualitative research methods provided the avenue needed to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. All data collected during the interviewing process was coded and categorized to determine themes.

Role of the Researcher

According to Terherani et al. (2015), the most important data collection tool in qualitative research is the researcher. Qualitative research is far from a homogenous endeavor. As the sole researcher of this study, my role was that of an observer participant. I actively listen, ask questions, and record the experiences, thoughts, and beliefs shared by the interviewee. Assuming the role of an observer provided a naturalistic window for me to develop a contextualized understanding of how the participants of this study perceive educational resilience in a naturalistic setting. However, observations are mere memories without the accompaniment of fieldnotes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During the interview process it is crucial for the researcher to engage interview participants from various perspectives and remain unbiased. The use of a reflexive journal helps ensure qualitative researchers engage in personal and epistemological reflexivity throughout the research process (Ramani et al., 2018) to ensure no aspects of the study are influenced by the personal beliefs or assumptions of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). I assumed the joint role as a participant and seek to engage participants in a meaningful dialogue. Individual interviews are used to collect data in qualitative research using open ended questions and inductive probing questions to delve deeper into the participants experiences (Guest et al., 2017). According to Baillie (2019), individual interviews consist of a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. The use of paraphrasing, probing and follow up questions provided additional details and clarity to the participant's account, ensuring high quality data was collected.

As an experienced early childhood educator, I anticipated being able to easily build a rapport of trust, security, and acceptance. A reflexive field journal was used to ensure that any personal biases or notions were recognized and managed. As an interviewer, I remained neutral and unbiased. Primary teachers with whom I have had any type of work related relationships or friendships with were excluded from this study. Individuals working at the educational facility in which I work, were also excluded from this study.

Methodology

For this basic qualitative study, a subgroup of educators consisting of primary grade educators formed the participant population. Research consisting of a qualitative methodology is derived from the data gathered from individuals who have firsthand experience with the phenomena of interest (Smith, 2020). Therefore, a basic qualitative methodology design was chosen for this study due to the study's desire to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience.

Participant Selection

The study participant population for this study included primary grade educators who had at least three years of experience working with rural primary children in the southern United States. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007) nonprobability sampling is the most appropriate way to select research participants who fit the specifications of the study. The participants were selected using the purposeful sampling snowballing strategy. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative studies to identify and recruit participants who

have information rich experiences or knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). Snowballing allows researchers to purposefully sampling individuals with specific characteristics, who know others who have similar characteristics, who also know others with the same characteristics (Palinkas et al., 2015). A participant must have served as an educator and had at least three years of experience in a rural primary grade setting located in the southern region of the United States. Volunteers were screened prior to the interview process to ensure they meet the established participant criterion for this study. For this study, 12 participants were recruited. When establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, it is essential to prove credibility (Shenton, 2004). To provide evidence for the credibility of a study, researchers attempt to show a genuine picture of the phenomenon being studied (Shenton, 2004). The rationale supporting my recruitment of 12 participants was based on the work of Shenton (2004), because this number allowed me to establish the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of this study. Participants were identified, contacted, and recruited via specific procedures. The use of social media and publicly available emails provided an avenue for purposeful snowballing.

Instrumentation

As the sole researcher for this study, I developed an interview protocol, which I followed when interviewing volunteer participants. The interview protocol consisted of twelve open ended interview questions and prompts that encouraged volunteers to elaborate on their responses. This set of interview questions were aligned with the conceptual framework and the single research question (see Table 3).

Table 3*Alignment of the Conceptual Framework, Research Question, and Interview Questions*

Table A: Alignment of Research & Interview Questions & Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework		Interview Questions
Bronfenbrenner – Ecological Systems Theory	Masten – Theory of Resilience	
Exosystem (Home, School, Community)		IQ1: In your own words, please define resilience as it relates to the lives of students at home, school, and in the community. Prompt
Mesosystem (Home, School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts to change • Embraces & perseveres with challenges • Self regulates • Socially competent • Builds friendships • Is inspired by the success of others • Remains tenacious in academic adversities • Self efficacy & Applies extra effort to develop skills 	IQ2: How do you describe academic success of primary grade students? Prompt IQ3: Please describe the linkages between student resilience and academic success. Prompt IQ4: How do you support your students abilities to adapt to change? Prompt IQ5: What strategies do you use that encourage your students to embrace and persevere with challenges? Prompt IQ6: Describe how you foster your students' abilities to self regulate their behaviors. Prompt. IQ7: What types of activities do you engage your students in that build their social competences? Prompt IQ8: How do you promote student friendships among all learners? Prompt IQ9: Please identify resources you use to foster student abilities to be inspired by the success of others. Prompt IQ10: Talk about supports you provide to encourage students to remain tenacious in academic adversities. Prompt IQ11: What do you do with your students to help them understand the relationship between extra effort and development of skills? Prompt IQ12: What are other ways you promote students' academic success by actively developing their resilience? Prompt
	Theory of Resilience	

The interview questions for this study were derived from the conceptual frameworks of Masten's (2001) theory of resilience and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological systems. The interview questions were designed to provide the necessary data to answer the research question (Table 3).

Aspects of Masten's (2001) theory of resilience used for the development of the interview questions of this study include: how children adapt, embrace, remain tenacious, work to develop or improve skills, and persevere when faced with challenges; and how children become inspired by the success of others, self regulate, display social competence, self efficacy, and build friendships to develop resilience. Aspects of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecological systems strengthened the development of the interview questions of this study by incorporating the relationships found within the microsystems (things that directly influence and interact with the child: parents, caregivers/teachers, friends.), mesosystems (the interactions of microsystems such as teacher and parent interactions in the home and at school), exosystem (social structures that influence the child indirectly, such as a parent's work environment and community), and macrosystem (items that influence the perceptions and beliefs of a child throughout their life such as poverty, spiritual or religious beliefs, and geographical location) and how the relationships, influences, and interactions at the various levels effects a child's resilience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Individual interviews provide researchers with a means to explore complex situations and understand the personal perceptions of those who have experience with the phenomenon through open ended and follow up questioning (New South Wales Government, 2019). Qualitative researchers encourage

participants to explain their experiences in great detail by allowing researchers to inquire beyond close ended questions (Onepoll, 2017). The interview questions in this study provided a means to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. An expert in the field of early childhood education reviewed the researcher developed interview questions and established its sufficiency (see Appendix F).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I received IRB approval to use social media and publicly available emails to recruit interview participants, email to send the participant's informed consent form and interview questions. Upon IRB approval, a recruitment invitation message and informed consent forms was sent to potential participants using social media and publicly available emails (see Appendix B).

I was able to find publicly available emails using three components of this study: rural area, southern region of the United States, and poverty. Rural children are more likely to experience ACEs including higher rates of poverty which contributes to educational difficulties (see Showalter et al., 2019). Therefore, poverty was included as an inclusionary factor.

First, rural counties in a southern state were identified (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020). Rural counties received a Rural Urban Continuum Code of an eight (completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area) or nine (completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, not adjacent to a metro area)

(United States Department of Agriculture, 2020). There were 21 counties within a particular state in the southern region of the United States.

The 21 rural counties were then filtered based on the poverty percentages of children between the ages of zero and 19 (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020). Seventeen counties met the three criteria.

The zip codes of the 17 counties were listed, totaling 56. The zip codes were then entered into Great Schools (2022) and 26 zip codes were found to have public schools that serve primary grade students. Within these 26 zip codes, there were 29 schools, two schools were listed in two different zip codes. I googled each school's name, found the school's homepage, verified the address, and searched each homepage for staff email, meet the teachers, or contact us for publicly available primary grade teacher or administrator emails. I was able to successfully find 236 publicly available emails.

To initiate the recruitment process, the invitation flyer was sent to 36 publicly available primary grade teacher or administrator emails, posted on social media platforms including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

As participants meeting the criteria for the study (three years of experience serving as a primary grade educator in the rural southern region on the United States and professional learning in supporting students' development of resilience) were accepted to participate, I contacted them via social media or email, depending on how they contacted me, to schedule an interview appointment date and time. The informed consent form discussing the purpose of the study, their role as an interview participant, benefits, and risks, confidentiality, and the option to opt out or stop at any point without repercussions

was then sent to each potential participant response. Once 12 participants were selected, either a telephone or videoconference interviews was scheduled at a date and time convenient for the participant. The interview questions were sent to the participants as a professional courtesy (see Appendix D). Allowing each participant time to organize their thoughts and be as comfortable as possible during the interview process.

Each interview followed the scripted interview protocol to ensure interview consistency on the part of the researcher (see Appendix C). Per the interview protocol, (see Appendix C) the beginning of each interview started with a greeting and sentiment of gratitude. Participants were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary, and they may could end the interview at any time and may choose to have their responses expunged from the data (see Appendix C). I confirmed each participant met the criteria required for this study (see Appendix C). Interview questions followed the research and interview question script, ensuring consistency for all interviews (see Appendix E).

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the personal bias of a researcher can affect the analysis of a study due to personal connections, relationships, or views associated with aspects of the study. Throughout the research process, qualitative researchers must engage in personal reflexivity (Ramani et al., 2018). Personal reflexivity on the part of the researcher, involves the personal reflection of beliefs or thoughts that could possibly influence the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Throughout this study, I maintained a reflexive journal. Bias is a potential hazard for all research and being aware

of any biases is essential in research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The reflexive journal allowed me to be aware of personal biases and ensure they did not affect this study.

Data Analysis Plan

Data for this basic qualitative study with interviews was collected from primary grade educators regarding their perspectives of educational resilience on the academic success of rural primary students. The research question of this study was used to design the interview questions (see Appendix A). I listened to digital audio tapes of interviews several times and data was transcribed immediately following each interview. Then a thematic analysis was conducted. Thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research due to the flexibility and freedom it provides (Majumdar, 2019). During thematic analysis, codes, patterns, and categories will be emerging (Saldaña, 2015). The categories and themes that emerged provided an understanding of how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. Themes emerged that highlight how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience. The codes, patterns, and categories revealed during the thematic analysis provided precise descriptions and interpretations of the themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and may highlight teacher practices, rural school environments, and adaptive systems that promote the development of resilience and the protective factors of resilience that promote the academic resilience of primary grade students in rural schools. Once all data was analyzed, it was sent to participants for verification or member checking. Harper and Cole (2012) suggested checking for accuracy of interview transcriptions and

summaries improves credibility and validity of the data collected. The themes and found in the data was used to understand how primary grade teachers in rural schools define educational resilience in their primary grade students and how they describe the influence of education resilience on the academic success of their students.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a multifaceted factor in qualitative research consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Burkholder et al., 2016). The responsibility of proving trustworthiness, rest squarely on the shoulders of the researcher. Trustworthy research requires internal and external transparency of the researcher in all aspects of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Once the data has been collected, it must be critically examined if it is to be considered trustworthy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To increase the trustworthiness of this study, I incorporated member checking.

Credibility

The credibility of a study comes from who is interviewed and how well the researchers verify the participant information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). “In addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented,” (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). For this study several methods of triangulation were used, such as multiple participant interviews and member checking (Breitmayer, 1991). Twelve participants were interviewed providing sufficient data for analysis and coding as a means of triangulation to add additional credibility to this study. Each interview question for this study contained a follow up prompting question that

required me to check for understanding (see Appendix E). Member checking was used to allow participants the opportunity to review the data collected and verify if it is an accurate representation of their experiences or needs revision (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the external validity of a study. Researchers must assess the findings of a study consisting of a sample population and determine if the findings are transferable or generalizable to a larger population of similar individuals (Burkholder et al., 2016; Lambert, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The transferability of this study will be ultimately determined by the readers and their contexts (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Reflexivity and thick descriptions are two strategies that will be used in this qualitative study to enhance transferability. To improve the transferability of this study, I exercised reflexivity and maintain a reflexive journal recording any personal biases encountered throughout the study. Transferability was further enhanced using thick descriptions of the settings, participants, and evidence that supported the findings of the study (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Dependability

Two strategies used to improve the dependability of a study include audit trails and triangulation (Burkholder et al., 2016). Audit trails consist of both inquiry and confirmability audits. Dependability can be improved by focusing on inquiry audits that explain how data was collected, how qualitative categories were determined, and how the researcher made decisions during the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation involves collecting data from multiple sources or multiple methods to ensure various

viewpoints are explored, providing robust and in depth data (Lambert, 2012).

Interviewing teachers from various schools provided different perspectives and improved the dependability of my findings.

Confirmability

Qualitative research is subject to the personal bias of the researcher (Burkholder et al., 2016). One goal of qualitative research is to remove biases so that the original study's findings would be replicable if the study were repeated by other researchers, thus improving confirmability by proving reliability (Lambert, 2012). The use of confirmability audits allows other researchers access to the reflective documents of a study to investigate its confirmability and dependability (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Reflective documents such as field notes, memos, interview transcripts, and data analysis documents that use thick descriptions are essential for a transparent confirmability audit (Burkholder et al., 2016).

I maintained organized reflective documentation during this study, which included a reflexive journal, field notes, interview transcripts, and all data analysis documents. Personal bias can directly affect how the data is recorded and analyzed (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Researchers need to demonstrate personal reflexivity to eliminate personal bias (Ramani et al., 2018). Practicing personal reflexivity via internal transparency using a reflexive journal to monitor emotions, thoughts, and beliefs throughout the study will reduce the change of researcher influenced findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This process made me keenly aware of my bias and helped me eliminate

them from the study. Interviews were conducted using the interview protocol (see Appendix E).

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures ensure all parties of the study, participants and myself, are not emotionally or physically harmed or disadvantaged (Lambert 2012). Once approval to conduct this study was received from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I proceeded and utilize the highest standard of ethical procedures. As the researcher, I remained humble, honest, and respectful at all times during the research process. My first ethical task was to complete the IRB application so that data collection could begin. Once approval was received, I sent informed consent request via social media and email. Aspects of the study were explained in this message, including the potential benefits and risks associated with this study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, their right to ask questions, and their ability to view the study's findings. Participants were also reminded their participation is completely voluntary and they may stop participating in the process at any time with no negative consequences. I assured each participant their information and any information shared related to this study would not be shared and would be protected and kept confidential within the limits of the law and stored in password protected electronic files. Any handwritten notes, memos, journals, and other hard copy items would be locked in a filing cabinet in a filing cabinet in my home. All documents would remain intact and protected for five years as required by Walden University.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. As the researcher of this study, I explored how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience via semi structured interviews. Data collected during the interview process was audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by me to answer the RQ of this study. The ethical procedures and considerations of this study adhered to the Walden University guidelines. The intent of this study was to potentially promote social change by heightening the awareness levels of teachers concerning the importance of supporting the development of educational resilience in students who are experiencing adversities. In Chapter 3, the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures will be discussed. In Chapter 4, I discuss the setting, explain the data collection and data analysis, and present the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools located in the southern region of the United States by supporting the development of their resilience. I interviewed 12 primary grade teachers, three teachers at each grade level, for students enrolled in prekindergarten through second grade. Two criteria for participants included teachers with three or more years of experience teaching in the rural southern region of the United States and teachers who had participated in professional learning opportunities regarding student resilience. Teachers years of experience and professional learning supported their abilities to address the research questions designed to explore how teachers promote the academic success of students by supporting the development of students' resilience. One research question guided the study: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by developing their resilience?

Research supports findings that many students attending rural schools in the southern United States have challenges, and many have experienced aversive childhood experiences (Cromartie et al., 2020; Lafavor, 2018; McHenry-Sorber, 2019; Showalter et al., 2019). Teachers reported numerous challenges encountered by their students as well as many protective factors they perceive to promote the development of resilience. Little is known about how rural teachers in rural areas of the United States promote the academic success of primary grade students by supporting the development of resilience. Lafavor (2018) suggested additional research is needed to identify ways to promote

students' resilience. This study is important because researchers have found that educators can promote academic success of students by influencing the development of their educational resilience (Frazier et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2021). The research question that guided the study was: How do teachers promote the academic success of their primary grade students in rural schools by supporting their development of resilience? The interview protocol used for this study was designed to gain insight into how teachers perceive and promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural southern schools by developing their resilience. In Chapter 4, I review the setting for the study, and relevant participant characteristics and demographics. The data collection and data analysis is also explained. Additionally, I will present the results and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

Participants were recruited through social media and publicly available emails. Interviews were conducted via telephone or a videoconferencing platform, dependent on the preference of the participant. Each interview was completed in one sitting that lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Demographics

Twelve primary grade teachers, meeting the inclusion factors of this study, participated in this study (Table 4). Each participant taught in a Title 1 school. Each participant was given an alphanumeric code which became each participant's pseudonym (see Table 4).

Table 4*Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Primary	
Pseudonym	Grade Taught	Years of Service
AT 1	PK	8 years
AT2	PK	4 years
AT3	PK	4 years
BT1	K	7 years
BT2	K	13 years
BT3	K	6 years
CT1	First	3 years
CT2	First	15 years
CT3	First	22 years
DT1	Second	4 years
DT2	Second	17 years
DT3	Second	9 years

Data Collection

Once Walden University IRB approval was granted, I began the data collection process. The data collection of this study consisted of developing protocols, participant recruitment, and semi structured interviews. The recruitment flyer indicating the eligibility requirements were placed on LinkedIn, Facebook, and sent to publicly available educational emails. Two hundred thirty-six publicly available educator emails were found. Recruitment email flyers were sent out in four batches each batch consisting of 56 emails. The first batch was sent out the day IRB approval was received. Additional

batches were sent out every other day. Of the original 236 publicly available emails, 224 recruitment email flyers were sent to various rural southern primary grade educators in the United States in a seven day time frame. In response to the recruitment email flyer, nine eligible participants volunteered within the first ten days. After viewing the social media flyer, six eligible participants emailed me directly nine days after the flyer was posted on a social media platform. In total, 15 volunteers showed interest in the study. Of the 15 volunteers only 12 participants were selected to ensure equal participation for each primary grade level. Each participant selected an interview date and time to meet their personal needs and elected to participate in the interview process via telephone or videoconference (Zoom). Eleven participants chose to participate via phone and one participant chose to participate via videoconference. For those electing to participate in a telephone interview, I used a Google phone number instead of my personal phone number. A Zoom link was sent to the participant, who elected to participate in the interview via videoconference. Audio was recorded using a Sony ICD-UX570 Series Digital Recorder and a Samsung smartphone as a safety measure guarding against the possible loss of data in the event a technical issue should occur.

The duration of data collection was two weeks. Interviews commenced on May 14, 2022 and were completed on May 19, 2022. Participants were emailed the interview questions prior to the scheduled interview. By providing participants with the interview question prior to the interviews, participants had time to review the questions and consider their experiences, allowing them to become comfortable with the information they wished to share. The interview protocol, used consistently for each interview,

reiterated the Walden University informed consent guidelines (see Appendices). Following the initial interview protocol, I began the participant interview using questions constructed to explore how teachers perceive resilience and promote academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting resilience (see Appendix E). I conducted the interviews from my home office. The privacy ensured others could not hear the contents of the interview. The audio files of each interview were transferred to a secure password protected file on my desktop along with transcriptions, my reflexive journal, and all other electronic documentation related to this study. All hard copies and paper documentation were and will continue to be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office for five years following Walden University's policy and procedures.

Data Analysis

Data for this basic qualitative study with interviews was collected from 12 primary grade teachers of students in grades PK-2 regarding their perspectives of educational resilience on the academic success of rural PK-2 students. Data analysis for this study was completed using the following steps: transcribed interviews, organized data, coded data, grouped data, established patterns, labeled data by categories, recognized emerging themes emerged, and recorded findings. As the researcher of this study, I preformed the data analysis independently without the use of analysis software. Transcribing the interviews was the first step of the data analysis process. Immediately following the completion of each interview, I listened to the audio recording numerous times and transcribed the data exactly as stated. Listening to the interviews multiple times while transcribing provided an opportunity to disseminate the data. After ensuring that

each transcript contained no information that could be used to identify the participant, the transcription was read again to ensure that I was familiar with the data. Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric (AN) code to protect their identity as addressed in informed consent. Once transcription of the data was completed, coding followed.

Table 5

Examples of Patterns & Categories and Themes that Emerged

Patterns & Categories	Theme
1.Social support, professional learning opportunities, professional development, professional trainings, teacher training, teacher workshop, collaboration, support staff, parent support, additional services, Frightening, disturbing, violent, death, abuse at home, exposure to use of drugs, alcohol, pornography, poverty, homelessness, hunger	Theme 1: Building a Community of Practice
2.Relationships, teacher-child relationship, peer friendships, friendship, teacher-parent relationship, child-guardian/parent relationship, positive role model, positive relationship, family, parent that is involved, school family, team, teamwork, peer partnering, inclusiveness, siblings, partner, group, group mates, new groups, members, best friends, strong support system, social support	Theme 2: Promoting Adaptive Systems
3.Motivated, safe, successful, encourage, productive struggle, work, builds confidence, excited to learn, different levels, motivated, feel loved, cared for, feed them, inviting, warm, accepted Growth, development, individual growth, growth mindset, academic growth, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, physical ability, physically talented, social-emotional, emotionally, social skills, work ability, attitude, willing to get correction,	Theme 3: Creating a Safe and Enriched Environment
4.Socially, get along, social network, behavior, social interactions, ready to work, understanding, ability, independent, self sufficient,	Theme 4: Implementing a Whole Child Approach
5.Continues to adulthood, even to adults, adults, more than adults, stuff like adults, into their adult lives, adult figures, as adults, adult life, easier than adults,	Theme 5: Engaging in Reflective Practice

Thematic analysis was used during the data analysis process to explore codes, groups, and patterns. Thematic analysis was used to progress from codes, groups, and patterns, allowing themes in the data to emerge (Saldaña, 2015). Data was then organized

into two distinct tables. Table 5 provides examples of the second cycle of coding and themes that emerged.

The groups and patterns were based on the conceptual framework of this study which is composed of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems including the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem, along with Masten's (2001) theory of resilience. I methodically reviewed the raw data looking for repeated or similar words and phrases, these codes were highlighted, color coded, collapsed, and grouped. I was then able to identify patterns and categories. Repeated codes were grouped and considered to be patterns (see Saldaña, 2015). Originally, I had 352 codes after the first cycle of coding that included repeated words, synonyms, and similar phrases. After I collapsed the data by combining similar codes and phrases and removing repetitions, four themes emerged. No discrepant cases were identified during the data analysis process of this study. The data collected during this study was consistent and void of contradictions to the themes identified during the data analysis process. The themes that addressed the RQ were as follows:

1. Theme 1: Building a Community of Practice
2. Theme 2: Promoting Adaptive Systems
3. Theme 3: Creating a Safe and Enriched Environment
4. Theme 3: Implementing a Whole Child Approach.
5. Theme 5: Engaging in Reflective Practice.

Results/Findings

This basic qualitative study was performed to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. The data collected from 12 rural primary grade teachers, following the interview protocol, was meant to generate responses that were indicative of their perceptions of academic success as it relates to the resilience of their students.

The responses collected from participants' interviews addressed one research question that was guided by the conceptual framework for this study which was a combination of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Masten's resilience theory. The research question of this study was as follows: How do teachers in rural schools promote the academic success of primary grade students by supporting their resilience in the lives of their students at home, school, and in the community; and how do these teachers describe the influence of educational resilience on the academic success of their students?

Data was collected from each of the 12 participants as they responded to the 12 interview questions. Each interview question was embedded with elements of the conceptual framework and designed to address the research question. The 12 interview questions were designed to either explore the perceptions of the participants components of resilience as they pertained to the specific systems of Bronfenbrenner, such as the exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem, or to encourage participants to share the classroom practices they use and feel supported the development of resilience within the classroom.

Theme 1: Building a Community of Practice

Teachers in this study shared professional relationships, opportunities, and supports they feel improve their ability to reach and teach their students. Teachers were concerned with the adversities their students encounter and how to counter effects negative of trauma. Teacher AT1 reported some of the adversities and trauma her students face that require a growth mindset of resilience:

Students today experience and see many things at school, at home, in their communities, and in media/social media. These things may be past their developmental level of understanding, may be frightening, or disturbing and difficult to process.... My students have encountered violent and non-violent death of family members, abuse at home, exposure to/use of drugs, alcohol, pornography, neglect, daily violence, poverty, homelessness, hunger.... Student resilience is the ability of the student to work through or work past these distractions and impediments and keep a continued focus on learning and one's own growth and development.... We talk about one's thinking and self-talk, so students can see, hear, understand a model for how to address positive change and challenges. Linking students with necessary resources, such as counseling, activities, academic support, etcetera.

CT3 stated:

I teach the first grade, but I am located in a rural area. I feel like the obstacles and hardships of my students are neglected because the focus is on bigger.... Some of the obstacles my students face includes things like not having enough food at

home, or parents that neglect them, parents with drug problems, no parents at all, living in a car, and sometimes even living in unsafe situations due to the people in the home.

At times teachers reported reaching out for additional supports and services they felt would benefit the needs of their students. CT1 reported, “A good handful of my students visit the mental health counselor or **school** guidance person which is good because they need someone to talk to.” DT2 reported the need for and importance of additional support staff and physical therapist:

My students are special needs. They obviously must overcome a whole lot. They must learn how to cope with their different disabilities. They're very resilient and bounce back. It doesn't matter if they're picked on or if they, or have to overcome vision issues, or mobility issues, or whatever. With the right support they learn to cope. They are very resilient and persistent so that's why they're my heroes.... I use a therapy dog named Jelly Bean. Almost everyone loves animals, especially kids. So they are attracted to Jelly Bean and he has really helped, not just my student regular education students too. He draws them (regular education students) in and one of my students may be holding Jelly so regular students are interacting with my students.

At times teachers need the help and support of parents. AT3 stated:

I have a student who was in the car when her mother got shot. The child told me what had happened the next day on our way out to recess. I asked her if she wanted to talk to someone, she said no and headed right on out the door. I called

the counselor and made her aware of the information, because I am not equipped to handle things like that.

BT2 shared how she builds her community of practice with the parents of her students:

If they (students) are, unmotivated is very hard to reach them. You have to almost go away from academics and talk to the parents to find out what makes them tick, what do they like? Is it Spiderman? You need to know what they are into so you can draw them in. If a parent says Spiderman, I go to the kid and say, *“You know Spiderman likes to spin his webs and climb those buildings, But he has to know his letters because he doesn’t know what building he needs to go to. He can’t save the people if he can’t read.”*

Teachers build positive relationships with their students that demonstrate care, concern, empathy, and respect. These relationships are enhanced when teachers take the time to incorporate the child’s exosystem and develop a strong community of practice. The additional support from professional development opportunities, mental health personnel, physical therapist, vision specialist, parents and other support staff was reported by teachers to meet the needs that a regular education teacher could not and help students to develop successfully despite adversity.

Theme 2: Promoting Adaptive Relationships

Teachers perceived that promoting adaptive relationships support the development of resilience in PK-2 students. Teachers expressed their perspectives that as teachers support a variety of adaptive student relationships, they promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools. They stressed the importance of taking

proactive steps to develop teacher-student relationships and school personnel-student relationships, and support the development of teacher-parent partnerships, parent-student relationships, and student friendships to support the academic success, resilience, and overall healthy development of their primary grade students.

Participants in this study indicated forming a positive teacher-student relationship was more than merely engaging a student in conversation. CT1 explained why she perceived nurturing a positive teacher-student relationships were paramount for her students.

I think it is extra important that I build positive healthy relationships with my students because number one, I might be the only positive person in this child's life and number two, I want my students to understand how a healthy relationship works.

BT3 described the relationship she has with her students and their parents.

My relationship as a teacher of kindergarten students, heightens my responsibility to help bridge the gap between school and home and provide a safe place for my students to come in and feel loved and cared for.... Parent involvement is essential to learning. Parents are their students' first teacher. Some parents may have had bad experiences as a student or with teachers of older siblings. I want the parents of my students on board from day one so that we are on the same page and leading the student in the right direction. I have my students for 180 days, parents have them for life. (Let's work together to) set them up for success! When the parent is involved the students will thrive!

Teachers supported the development of parent-student relationships by allowing students to call home and share good grades and other student accomplishments. AT3 perceived parent-student relationships can have a positive influence on the study habits of primary grade students:

A supportive and involved parent takes time to help their child study. They may read AR books with their child or have their child read to a younger sibling. These parents go over the sight words with their child and help their child study....

Teachers in this study supported student-student relationships by allowing kids read with a friend to build their confidence, makes them feel safe, and fully participate in group work. A representative comment was made by DT3:

I have a student this year and she is a little overweight and she was very hesitant at the beginning of the year. She did not want to interact with anybody. And she's a very smart little girl, but she was like unsure of herself all the time. So, I kept encouraging this other very sweet little girl in my class, you know kept encouraging them to be partners when we did stuff for, you know, they were in the same group. They have about same academic ability so during their group time, I sat them beside each other and now on the playground they are like glue. They're stuck together, they're playing, and I mean it's just night and day from the way the girl that I was talking about at the beginning, how she was at the beginning of the year to how she is now. like her mom even tells me all the time how she loves school now because she is like friends this year and you know

that's a big thing for kids to make friends and to enjoy school, yes, it is to learn, but also enjoy it.

Teachers supported the development of adaptive relationships. Teachers perceived building and nurturing teacher-student relationships and school personnel-student relationships, parent-student relationships, and student friendships supported the academic success, resilience, and overall healthy development of their primary grade students.

Theme 3: Creating a Safe and Enriched Environment

Teachers perceive enriched learning environments support the development of resilience, promoting the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools. Teachers expressed enriched educational environments motivate students to learn and work through challenging experiences contributing to student success and confidence. BT1 reflected on the resources available to her via the school library to lay the foundation of an inclusive classroom, "We start the year off reading a book typically it's like *Chrysanthemum* or *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* that deals with a child not fitting in at school. Then, we talk about how we are a school family and want everyone to feel loved and appreciated."

BT2 explained how she promoted a sense of belonging and acceptance by supporting the individual talents of one of her students:

I have a student who reading is really hard for, but he is an amazing drawer. We write a lot but I always point out, "*Wow! I love the detail of your flowers*" or "*I love how you gave your dog a collar.*" We talk about these things in class and

now it's so funny because he might not be the best writer, but none of the kids notice it. They're all noticing his pictures and telling him, "*It's so good*" and "*I wish I could draw like you.*" So that's building that kids confidence, too. He knows that's where he's really good at.

When asked about strategies used to encourage students to embrace and persevere with challenges, AT1 reported, "I provide a safe place for students to talk about their challenges and work through them." AT3 stated, "Giving students verbal praise, flexibility, and creating a positive learning environment builds students' confidence to become successful." AT2 similarly stated, "When the child is feeling motivated, she's not feeling frustrated because she has a strong support system. This definitely increases the chances of this child achieving higher grades."

Theme 4: Implementing a Whole Child Approach

Teachers perceived that the developmental domains supported the development of resilience and promoted the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools. Teachers implemented a whole child approach to meet the developmental needs of all children. CT3 stated:

The social, emotional, cognitive, and physical challenges can be detrimental to student success and may occur not only within the school, but in the home and community as well. The impact of those challenges may also carry over into adulthood.... The academic success of primary grade students, in my opinion is multi-faceted. It is more than the cognitive ability alone. It consists of a desire to engage in educational activities as well as the ability to acquire the knowledge. It

includes their insightfulness and general skills such as problem-solving, and persistence to follow through in an activity. It is also the ability of the child to gain satisfaction in his or her achievement.

DT1 expressed concern when discussing the social skills of her students, "... social skills are a big thing. I see a lot of kids don't have the social skills. I have a bunch of kids that have missed a lot of school. Socially they struggle get along with people."

BT2 reported:

We do a lot of modeling. We talk through a lot of scenarios. I'm explaining if someone hits you, you're not going to run to me first thing. You're going to tell that person to stop. I'm talk about how that conversation will look, because a lot of kids don't know. All they know is hit him back, or I'm going to tell the teacher.... We do a lot of roleplays at the beginning of the year. My para-pro and I will act out, like on the playground if someone breaks in front of you while you're trying to go up the slide. What you should say and how you should handle that situation.... If someone was running, not looking where they were going, and accidentally bumped into you. You may need to have that conversation. "*Hey, you ran into me*" more than likely that kid is going to say, "*I'm sorry, I didn't see you.*" So we just talk about those kind of things.... I use a lot of books like *Bootsie Barker Bites*.... I used a lot of books and we talked through those books.

AT3 shared:

At the beginning of the year, we read books like *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry*. We read books like that to help them learn to control those

behaviors because they don't know.... I will let them eat lunch with me. They love the attention and recognition of sitting with me at lunch. We talk and have a great conversation during this time.... They may come from a home where they see their dad hit their mom when he gets mad. They think this is normal. I try to teach them otherwise. We acknowledge the negative behavior and why it isn't appropriate. Then we talk about the situation or what set us off. We talk about what we did, why we did it, if someone else was involved how it made them feel, how we feel when someone acts that way, how we wish that person would have treated us, and how we are going to treat others like we would like to be treated.... Group work, peer feedback, tableau, and jigsaw strategies give students the opportunity to exercise their social skills while learning.

Concerning social-emotional skills BT3 reported:

It (Becky Bailey's Conscious Discipline) is a social-emotional learning program. Teachers learn how to control their responses first, so they can guide students in self-regulation and self-control. We model the behaviors and strategies we want our students to use. It is a program that teaches students how to respond rather than just react.

AT1 explained:

I work hard to let students know that we are focused on helping them be the best that they can be. Whatever that is. I have said to many a student, and my own kids, as long as you are doing your best, that is all you can do. I will be happy

with that. Students need to know that we don't expect the impossible, but that we have high expectations that we want to work with them to achieve.

Teachers referred to their professional learning activities provided by the state department of education on aversive childhood events (ACEs) and the growth mindset to help develop students' resilience. CT2 explained:

A lot of times we only feel good about ourselves if we have someone telling us to feel good about ourselves. But the way we feel about ourselves should come from inside us, our confidence in our abilities, and how we see ourselves. So, when my students are down or upset, it's important for them to be able to process what they feel and why they feel that way and to find a way to cheer themselves up. Having a growth mindset gives them that ability.... When a child learns to manage his or her feelings, he or she can make decisions that are not emotionally influenced. They're also able to communicate better when they control their emotions.

Teachers perceived that the developmental domains played a role in supporting the development of resilience and promoted the academic success of their students in rural schools. Teachers reported implementing a whole child approach to meet the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive developmental needs of their students.

Theme 5: Engaging in Reflective Practices

Teachers incorporate reflective practices. Reflective practices provide teachers with the opportunity to consider their experiences, professional learning opportunities, and the roles they play in working with students and their families to improve their educational practice. Reflecting on their practices and student outcomes promotes the

academic success and resilience of primary grade students in rural schools. Reflecting on their professional learning opportunities, teachers are able to recognize the signs of a student who may be dealing with the trauma of ACEs and ways to incorporate available resources to support the needs of students. BT2 stated:

Most of the kids that we serve are in poverty, so they come from bad living conditions. Some of them are dirty. They come in, not ready for school. No one's ever read a book to them. They just don't know basic skills.... I am always just amazed at how those kids that come from those unthinkable places, how they show up every day and they're ready. They want to learn, some of them just really want to learn and they want to do their best. And that just amazes me, when the night before, they might not have known where they were going to sleep or if they had something to eat.

AT3 stated:

My students come from a lot of different situations. Many of them are pretty rough but when they get to school, they know it's going to be okay. They may need something to eat or an extra minute to get settled in or may need a hug or to talk first but once their need is met, they are ready to move forward. These children really need to feel successful and most of the time at this age, they really take pride in their work and do well.

Teachers expressed empathy when reflecting on the adversities their students encounter.

DT2 shared:

Every child, special needs, regular, and gifted, it doesn't matter, likes to be recognized. Positive verbal reinforcement is so driving. I mean, even to us as adults. How awesome is it when we are in a faculty meeting and we're praised, recognized as teacher of the month, or honored for some reason. If it (positive verbal reinforcement) can make adults feel that hyped up, imagine what it does for children.

AT2 shared, "Sometimes my students feel frustrated or like they don't have support. I tell them adults have these feelings too, and that it is okay to ask for help." A representative comment was stated by CT1, "The fact that they are so little but are still able to wake themselves up, put on their clothes, and catch the bus shows a tremendous amount of effort. I know adults who don't try that hard." Reflecting on personal life experience, AT1 defined resilience in the following way:

To me, resilience refers to the ability to persevere. This may be through academics, life challenges, illness, etcetera. Resilience is the ability to keep going without losing focus or personal drive despite challenges and the daily stressors of life. One continues to work, learn, and grow.

By incorporating reflective practices, teachers were able to connect their personal experiences, as well as professional experiences, to improve their educational practices. Teachers revealed that their reflective practices promoted the academic success and resilience of students. There were no discrepant cases found in this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential in qualitative research and the burden of proof is the responsibility of the researcher. Trustworthy research involves internal and external transparency on the researcher's behalf (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Burkholder et al. (2016) described trustworthiness as a multifaceted factor consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I have attempted to paint a genuine portrait that accurately reflects how teachers in this study perceived and promoted academic success of primary grade students in rural school by supporting resilience. Evidence of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this qualitative study are presented.

Credibility

The credibility of a study is determined by who is interviewed and how well the researcher verifies the information shared (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I implemented several strategies during the data collection process to increase credibility and ensure teachers' perceptions were accurately presented. Strategies such as reflexivity, saturation, and member checking, were used to improve the credibility of this study. As the researcher, it was critical for me to practice reflexivity and remain aware of my personal bias. Using a reflexive field journal to record notes about my thoughts and participant comments during the interview process, describing what I learned after an interview, and recording my personal reactions and thoughts. Through the constant journaling of my thoughts and data expectancies, I became exceedingly aware of personal perceptions. This awareness made it possible for me to separate myself from the study and remain

neutral. As the participants' interview data was collected, comparisons were made, and commonalities became increasingly apparent and at times repetitive providing evidence of saturation. Following the interviews, credibility was further increased by participant participation in member checking and verified the accuracy of the summary of findings.

Transferability

Transferability, or external validity, requires researchers to consider the sample population and the study results to determine if the findings would be transferable to a greater participant population of individuals meeting the same inclusionary factors (Burkholder et al., 2016; Lambert, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using social media, publicly available emails, and snowballing (as needed), produced variation in the participant selection process. Ultimately, 12 teachers with three or more years of experience in a rural primary grade setting, who had professional learning opportunities regarding student resilience volunteered to participate. The transferability of this study was further enhanced with probing questions which generated thicker descriptions and produced richer participant data. However, the transferability of this study will be established by the reader and their contexts (see Burkholder et al., 2016).

Dependability

Two strategies were implemented to increase the dependability of this study: audit trails and triangulation (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Throughout the duration of this study, I maintained audit trails documenting each research step. These records describe the life (starting from conception, through the development, and to the results) of this

study. The audit trail discussed the data collection process, how categories were determined, and why I made certain decisions during the study.

Dependability was further improved by triangulation of the data which occurred through the collection of data from 12 different participants. Collecting data from multiple participants allowed the exploration of various perceptions and provided more robust and in depth details and findings.

Confirmability

Throughout the duration of this study, I have maintained multiple reflective documents: a reflexive journal, field notes, interview transcripts, and audit trails. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), reflective documentation is essential when establishing confirmability. The documents I have maintained throughout this study are the components needed for a confirmability audit. While qualitative research is subject to researcher bias, the goal of qualitative research is to eliminate these biases, so that if the study was replicated by other researchers, the original results would be reiterated proving reliability and confirmability (Burkholder et al., 2016, Lambert, 2012). The use of confirmability audits allows other researchers access to the reflective documents of a study to investigate its confirmability and dependability (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Summary

In Chapter 4, I reported the results of this study. The results showed teacher promote the academic success of primary grade students I rural schools by building a community of practice, promoting adaptive relationships, creating a safe and engaging environment, implementing a whole child approach and engaging in reflective practices

to support the development of their resilience. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings, discuss the limitations, present recommendations for further research, and suggest the implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. I used 12 open ended interview questions intended for 12 primary grade teachers who had three or more years of experience teaching rural school students, who had also participated in professional learning opportunities focused on student resilience. This study had one RQ, as follows: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience? Five themes (practices that the 12 teachers use) emerged during data analysis to address the research question that explored how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students by supporting the development of their resilience. Teachers support the development of students' resilience by doing the following: (1) building a community of practice, (2) promoting adaptive relationships, (3) creating a safe and enriched environment, (4) implementing a whole child approach, and (5) engaging in reflective practice. In this chapter, I present the interpretation of the findings in connection with the literature review and conceptual framework, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications of this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I explain how the findings of this study are supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem) and Masten's (2001) resilience theory. I demonstrate how findings of this study are supported by previous research. Five themes emerged from analysis of data

collected from an interview protocol with 12 rural school primary grade teachers. The interpretation of the findings are supported by previous studies identified during my literature review, as well as by the conceptual framework.

Theme 1: Building a Community of Practice

Theme 1 revealed primary grade teachers supported the development of their students' resilience and countered the negative effects of ACEs by building a community of practice that promoted the academic success of students in rural schools. One finding of this study was rural teachers promote the development of student resilience by building a community of practice. This community of practice utilizes resources, supports, and human capital found in each child's ecological systems, such as human capital found in schools (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Frankland, 2021; Post et al., 2020; Wall, 2021), in recreational departments and other community members (Caldarella et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2020) and with family members (Abelev, 2009; Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Educators who work in schools with high levels of poverty and low student achievement were part of a professional development initiative in the state where this study was conducted. Professional learning utilized a play therapist and doctoral students trained in ACEs, resilience theory, and growth mindset to facilitate a statewide resilience project for low poverty schools (Post et al., 2020). Participants of this study shared the importance of building a CoP that focuses on the needs of students to support the development of student resilience and support academic success, which is supported in the literature (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Caldarella et al., 2019; Frankland, 2021; Scott et al., 2020; Wall, 2021).

Frankland's (2021) research supported Theme 1 of the current study and confirmed that schools offering interventions can support the development of student resilience and mitigate the effects of childhood trauma. Bates' and Morgan's (2018) research on communities of practice (CoPs) revealed that CoPs provided additional supports and resources teachers need when facing unique challenges. Wall's (2021) research found that administrators, teachers, librarians, office staff, and custodians came together as a CoP at trauma-informed schools to mitigate the impact of ACEs and promote students' academic success, social competency, and resilience, which also supported my findings. Caldarella et al. (2019) found that parents of children who are involved in community recreational sports and were members of a sport team reported their children demonstrated higher resilience levels. Scott et al. (2020) found that planning and implementing a community school partnership promoted student success and community engagement via mobilized assets. Participants of this study reiterated the findings of Abelev (2009) and Masten and Obradovic (2006) that ecological supports include educators, families, and members of the community who build a CoP dedicated to providing adaptive systems and protective factors that meet the needs of all learners and promote the development of student resilience.

Theme 2: Promoting Adaptive Relationships

Theme 2 revealed primary grade teachers support the growth of their students' resilience by supporting adaptive relationships including those of the student and teacher, student and parent, student and peers, and students and community to promote the academic success of students in rural schools. This theme is based on consistent reporting

by participants regarding the influence of positive relationships on the resilience of students who had experience one or more ACEs (Cantor et al., 2018; Diab et al., 2018; Holmes et al., 2018; McGee et al., 2020; Osher et al., 2018; Post et al., 2020). McGee et al. (2020) found close relationships, support systems, and beliefs can support the development of noncognitive traits including resilience, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of students. Cantor et al. (2018) found young people who develop positive relationships become resilient to adverse experiences. The similar findings of Osher et al., (2018) the long term effects of adverse childhood trauma can be minimized by the development positive relationships that promote resilience. Holmes et al. (2018) found the impact of a traumatic experience during the early childhood years can be lessened by a secure attachment with an adult caregiver. Diab et al., (2018) found positive relationships and internal motivation curtailed the influence of ACEs on academic success. This study supports the findings of Post et al., (2020) teachers felt that developing relationships with students was paramount in helping students build a resilience.

Findings of this study suggest positive adaptive relationships can be found throughout ecological levels with educators, families, religious affiliations, and members of a community fostering social competence, problem solving, and positive relationships which may lead to the development of resilience (Blewitt et al., 2020; Cadima et al., 2020; Coulombe & Yates, 2018; Schmitt et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2020; and Yule et al., 2019). Scott et al. (2020), found trust and open communication are two important elements of a positive partnerships that promotes meaningful interactions. Cadima et al., (2020) found when at-risk students develop healthy and supportive relationships with

their teachers, the ability of the students to develop self-regulation skills increases. Blewitt et al. (2020) found that secure teacher–child relationships may influence academic success. This study supports the findings of Schmitt et al. (2018) that linked positive teacher-child relationships developed during PK promoted mediations of externalizing negative behaviors during K. Likewise, Coulombe and Yates (2018) found positive teacher-student relationships lead to the development of adaptive behaviors and improved social-competence. Yule et al. (2019) found parental warmth was linked to adaptive behaviors in that it aided the connection between how a caregiver spoke to the child and the visible emotional change in the behavior.

Theme 3: Creating a Safe and Enriching Environment

Theme 3 revealed the students of primary grade teachers encounter ACEs, but teachers supported the development of their students' resilience by creating an inclusive safe and enriching environment that promotes the academic success of students in rural schools. The findings of Theme 3 were confirmed in the research of Dalziel et al. (2019), Machlin et al. (2021), McHenry-Sorber (2019), Poultney and Forbes (2020), Sacks and Murphy (2018), Showalter et al. (2019), and The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (2018). Factors of a child's ecological system such as chronic poverty add to the challenge of teaching students affected by ACEs (Showalter et al., 2019). Machlin et al. found rural families are at an increased risk for family violence and may find it difficult to maintain a safe environment during stay-at-home orders. Sacks and Murphy found that rural children have an increased likelihood of facing negative outcomes during their life. The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health

and Human Services reported 29% of rural children have encountered multiple ACEs before the age of 17. McHenry-Sorber found that rural children are 5.1% more likely to experience poverty. Poultney and Forbes found teacher who mindfully incorporated resilience based practices into their daily teaching, create an inclusive educational environment that allowed students to feel encouraged and safe. Dalziel et al. found the results of a positive educational practices include helping children develop a sense of belongingness and safety in their educational environment.

Theme 4: Implementing a Whole Child Approach

Theme 4 revealed primary grade teachers supported the development of their students' resilience by implementing a whole child approach that promoted the academic success of students in rural schools. Findings of this study suggested that due to ACEs, many rural students are missing cognitive and noncognitive skills including persistence, the ability to work through and adapt, motivation to learn, attitude, and mindset may promote or suppress the developmental domains and influence the student resilience. These findings are supported in the research of Distefano et al. (2021), Frazier et al. (2019), Johri and Misra (2017), Lafavor (2018), Lipscomb et al. (2019), Masten (2018), Masten et al. (2021), Skinner and Saxton (2019), Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk (2020), Wall (2021), and Yule et al. (2019). Johri and Misra found skills such as working smarter, hardworking, and memorizing, all help students achieve their academic targets and goals. Skinner and Saxton found the ability to cope academically involved increasing academic resilience, perseverance, and productive persistence. Wall found that when educators support child victims of ACEs learn to self-regulate their personal resilience increased

improving the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes. Masten found that individual resilience can influence an individual's ability to adapt to adversity and contribute positive educational and life experiences. Distefano et al. found higher levels of impulsivity were related to minute levels of self-regulation and weak social competence skills. Masten et al. found exposure to practicable doses of stress may have a positive influence on the ability to regulate stress and improve resilience. Additionally, Lipscomb et al. proposed the optimal time to strengthen a child's ability to self regulate and learn to empathize is during the developmental stages of early childhood. Frazier et al. found that students reporting higher stress levels assumed they had lower grade point averages due to a lack of effective coping skill, resilience, and social supports. Frazier et al. (2019) also found effective coping skills, resilience, and social supports were contributing factors of higher grade point averages; and student resilience, coping, self-efficacy can all promoted by teachers who support the development of cognitive and noncognitive skills. Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk found a significant correlation between ACEs and emotional self-efficacy on student resilience, with two of the most important developmental factors of resilience being attitude control and level of warmth and found self efficacy to be an indicator of resilience; resilience within one's environment promoted emotional regulation based on the perceptions, emotions. and situations encountered. Lafavor found the academic success of disadvantaged children can be predicted by their social and emotional skills. Yule et al. found emotional socialization behaviors of high risk children within an emotionally safe relationship can stimulate positive developmental outcomes. Kazmi and Muazzam found that resilience

considerably influenced coping difficulties, depression, and academic success. Baldwin et al. found students who participated in growth mindset interventions performed better academically. Protective factors such a growth mindset may contribute to adaptive outcomes and higher resilience (Schaefer et al., 2018).

Theme 5: Engaging in Reflective Practices

Theme 5 revealed that primary grade teachers support the development of their students' resilience by engaging in reflective practices that promote the academic success of students in rural schools. Teachers perceived that by reflecting on their practices, experiences, and roles in working with students and their families, they support the development of resilience. Therefore, teachers reflecting on their practices and student outcomes can promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools. These findings are confirmed by the findings of Hölzge et al. (2018) and Poultney and Forbes, (2020). Poultney and Forbes found when teachers purposefully integrated resilience based concepts into their daily teaching practices strived to generate a positive and inclusive educational environment, that students feel supported and comfortable. Hölzge et al. identified aspects of thriving (i.e., increased resilience), included positive personality traits, social support, motivation, and personal reflection.

Limitations of the Study

This study had a few limitations. This study was limited to primary grade teachers working with rural K-2 students in the southern region of the United States with a minimum of three years of experience and had professional learning opportunities regarding student resilience limiting the transferability to other primary grade settings.

Other limitations included sampling techniques, participant selections, and researcher bias. To ensure the participants selected had personal experiences and understandings of the phenomenon being investigated purposeful sampling was used. Recruitment flyers were posted on the social media platforms LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram and sent to 224 publicly available primary grade teacher emails. The findings of this study were representative of only a fraction of rural primary grade teachers' perspectives and may not be generalized to represent the perceptions of all rural primary grade teachers in one state located in the southern region of the United States. Another limitation to consider was all participants were female. The male perspective may differ from the female consensus. However, these limitations are necessary to answer the research question.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers perceive resilience and promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting their development of resilience. Results of this study reflected the perspectives of 12 rural primary grade teachers: three were PK teachers, three were K teachers, three were first-grade teachers, and three were second-grade teachers. The participants were located in southern region of the United States had diverse teaching experience ranging from three years to 22 years. Participants expressed building a community of practice, adaptive relationships, learning environments, consideration for the whole child, and engaging in reflective practices were paramount in supporting the development of student resilience and promoting academic success.

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that further research is needed to explore the perspectives of male primary grade teachers of rural students in the southern region of the United States. Further research is needed to determine if the perspectives of primary grade teachers from other rural regions of the United States support or counter the findings of this study.

Implications

The findings of this study propose positive social change implications in rural southern primary grade educational settings. This study accentuated the significance of teachers in supporting the development of student resilience. In the child's microsystem, teachers form positive relationships with families promoting parental involvement in their child's academic and nonacademic endeavors building strong relationships that support the development of resilience. In the child's mesosystem, the reflective practices of teachers within a community of practice enrich a child's learning environment by supporting a student's ability to successfully complete both cognitive and noncognitive challenges. In the child's exosystem, community support provides students with additional resources and services that support the development of student resilience. The implications of this basic qualitative study with interviews included the potential to promote positive social change by heightening K-3 educators' awareness about the importance of educational resilience, and ways to support the development of educational resilience in students who experienced academic adversities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience. Findings of my study may potentially contribute to a gap in practice and inform future educational policies. In Chapter 5, I state the findings, discuss the limitations, present recommendations for further research, suggest the implications of this study, and included recommendations for future studies based on the purpose of this study. This basic qualitative study with interviews was conducted to explore the local problem of low levels of academic success of primary grade students attending one rural educational site in the southern region of the United States, which could be caused by low academic resilience. The conceptual framework of this study was built on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (microsystems, macrosystems, and exosystems) and Masten's (2001) theory of resilience (the ability of a child to adapt to change, embrace challenges, remain tenacious, work to develop and improve skills, persevere when faced with adversity, respond positively to the success of others, self regulate, have a sense of self efficacy, display social competence, and build friendships) are combined to guide the conceptual framework for this study. The rural primary grade teachers who participated in this study identified how they support students' academic success and promote the development of their students' academic resilience. From data collected following an interview protocol with 12 participants, five themes emerged during the data analysis. The 12 interview questions were derived from the one research question of this study: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade

students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience? Theme 1 speaks of how teachers can minimize the negative effects of ACEs by supporting student resilience. Teachers promote academic success by building a community of practice that addresses the multifaceted needs of their students. Theme 2 addressed how teachers can support student resilience and academic success by building adaptive relationships within the students' ecological systems: student-teacher, student-parent, student-peers, and student-community. Theme 3 spoke of how teachers create a safe, inclusive and enriched learning environment that enables students to develop a sense of belonging and build the resilience needed to overcome academic challenges and ACEs. Theme 4 spoke about how teachers implemented a whole child approach to address the students' physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic (ability to communicate) needs, promoted cognitive and noncognitive development and the adaptability of students. Theme 5 addressed how teachers support student resilience and promote academic success by engaging in reflective practices that allow them to empathize with their students, reflect on professional learning experiences, and identify students who are possibly affected by ACEs. Findings of this study revealed that teachers who support the development of student resilience to promote academic success teach and focus on more than basic academic subjects and cognitive needs. In addition to academic skills, rural primary grade teachers support the development of resilience and other life skills that will support the healthy development of students in all domains of learning, which promotes academic success and positive life outcomes.

Further studies are needed to explore how teachers build a community of practice and the components thereof. Additional research is needed to extend the understanding of the adaptive relationships found within individual layers of a child's ecosystem. Future studies are needed to explore inclusive classroom or "*school family*" classroom practices and their perceived effect on students who experience ACEs. More research is needed to determine how the social, emotional, and linguistic skills deficit identified in some rural primary students can be strengthened through classroom practices. Finally, additional research is needed to specifically explore the reflective practices of rural primary grade teachers and the perceived student effect of these practices.

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Appendix A: Alignment of Research & Interview Questions & Conceptual Framework

RQ1: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience?		
Conceptual Framework		Interview Questions
Bronfenbrenner – Ecological Systems Theory	Masten – Theory of Resilience	
Exosystem (Home, School, Community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts to change • Embraces & perseveres with challenges • Self regulates • Socially competent • Builds friendships • Is inspired by the success of others • Remains tenacious in academic adversities • Self efficacy & Applies extra effort to develop skills • Theory of Resilience 	<p>IQ1: In your own words, please define resilience as it relates to the lives of students at home, school, and in the community. Prompt</p> <p>IQ2: How do you describe academic success of primary grade students? Prompt</p> <p>IQ3: Please describe the linkages between student resilience and academic success. Prompt</p> <p>IQ4: How do you support your students abilities to adapt to change? Prompt</p> <p>IQ5: What strategies do you use that encourage your students to embrace and persevere with challenges? Prompt</p> <p>IQ6: Describe how you foster your students' abilities to self regulate their behaviors. Prompt.</p> <p>IQ7: What types of activities do you engage your students in that build their social competences? Prompt</p> <p>IQ8: How do you promote student friendships among all learners? Prompt</p> <p>IQ9: Please identify resources you use to foster student abilities to be inspired by the success of others. Prompt</p> <p>IQ10: Talk about supports you provide to encourage students to remain tenacious in academic adversities. Prompt</p> <p>IQ11: What do you do with your students to help them understand the relationship between extra effort and development of skills? Prompt</p> <p>IQ12: What are other ways you promote students' academic success by actively developing their resilience? Prompt</p>
Mesosystem (Home, School)		

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Primary Grade (Kindergarten through Second Grade) Educators

The following script will be recited by the researcher prior to initiation of each interview:

Hi and thank you for volunteering to participate in this research interview. My name is Miranda Teston, and I am doctoral candidate at Walden University. As a requirement for the partial completion of this degree, all students must conduct a doctoral research study. I elected to conduct a basic qualitative study with interviews to collect the data needed for my research.

Thank for providing your informed consent. As a reminder, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. As stated in the informed consent form, no identifying information will be shared, and all responses will be kept confidential. Please let me know if you wish to stop recording or participating at any time.

You have given your verbal consent, certifying agreement to continue this interview. I will keep a copy of consent form on a password protected computer. You are welcome to keep a copy for your records if you wish.

Did you receive the email I sent containing the interview questions? This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. After the interview is completed, I will transcribe your responses and then email them to you so that you may check for accuracy. After reviewing the summary of findings, if there is anything you would like for me to revise or you would like to add, simply let me know and I will address it. If after a week I have not received a reply from you, I will assume you are satisfied with the summary of

findings and proceed with my study. A \$10 Amazon Gift card will be sent at this time. Once the study is complete, I will email you a copy of the findings.

To ensure accurate documentation and proper transcription, I would like your permission to digitally record this interview. Please let me know if you need to take a break, refer to a previous question, or need to stop at any time. You may also withdraw from the interview and have your responses removed without consequence.

The interview data collected during this study will be used to explore how primary grade educators describe and relate educational resilience to the academic success of their students teachers promote the academic success of rural primary grade students in the southern region of the United States by supporting resilience. As the sole researcher of this study, I will serve as the interviewer. Do you have any questions or concerns? Then with your permission we will begin.

Please confirm that you meet the criteria to participate in this research study by answering the following demographic questions:

- Have you served as a primary grade educator?
- How many years of experience do you have?
- Please describe the geographical location of the school in which you teach.
(North, South, East, West, or intermediates)
- Please describe the demographics of the area where you taught/teach. (rural, urban, metropolitan, or other)

Appendix C: Participant Interview Questions

Primary Grade (Kindergarten through Second Grade) Educators:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study. During the interview you will be asked the following questions. These questions have been provided to you so that you will have time to organize your thoughts and feel comfortable during the interview.

- 1: In your own words, please define resilience as it relates to the lives of students at home, school, and in the community.
- 2: How do you describe academic success of primary grade students?
- 3: Please describe the linkages between student resilience and academic success.
- 4: How do you support your students abilities to adapt to change?
- 5: What strategies do you use that encourage your students to embrace and persevere with challenges?
- 6: Describe how you foster your students' abilities to self regulate their behaviors.
- 7: What types of activities do you engage your students in that build their social competences?
- 8: How do you promote student friendships among all learners?
- 9: Please identify resources you use to foster student abilities to be inspired by the success of others.
- 10: Talk about supports you provide to encourage students to remain tenacious in academic adversities.
- 11: What do you do with your students to help them understand the relationship between extra effort and development of skills?
- 12: What are other ways you promote students' academic success by actively developing their resilience?

Appendix D: Research and Interview Questions

Primary Grade (Kindergarten through Second Grade) Educators

Date of Interview: _____

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Alpha Numeric Code: _____

RQ1: How do teachers promote the academic success of primary grade students in rural schools by supporting the development of their resilience?

Microsystems and Mesosystems

IQ1: In your own words, please define resilience as it relates to the lives of students at home, school, and in the community.

Prompt: I heard you say... Please tell me more about...

IQ2: How do you describe academic success of primary grade students?

Prompt: I heard you talk about... I'd like to know more about your thoughts on...

IQ3: Please describe the linkages between student resilience and academic success.

Prompt: You mentioned... Please tell me more...

IQ4: How do you support your students abilities to adapt to change?

Prompt: I heard you say... Could you please explain...

IQ5: What strategies do you use that encourage your students to embrace and persevere with challenges?

Prompt: You described... Please give me some examples of...

IQ6: Describe how you foster your students' abilities to self regulate their behaviors.

Prompt: I heard you say... Please elaborate

Exosystems and Macrosystems

IQ7: What types of activities do you engage your students in that build their social competences?

Prompt: You mentioned... I'd like to know more about your thoughts on why...

IQ8: How do you promote student friendships among all learners?

Prompt: I heard you say... Please tell me more about...

IQ9: Please identify resources you use to foster student abilities to be inspired by the success of others.

Prompt: Can you explain what makes you feel...

IQ10: Talk about supports you provide to encourage students to remain tenacious in academic adversities.

Prompt: I heard you say... I would like to know more about...

IQ11: What do you do with your students to help them understand the relationship between extra effort and development of skills?

Prompt: You mentioned... Please tell me more about...

IQ12: What are other ways you promote students' academic success by actively developing their resilience?

Prompt: I heard you say... Could you please give me a few examples of

Thank you again for your interview participation. The information you provided and experiences you shared have been fundamental in my research. To ensure that I accurately captured the information you shared, a copy of our interview summary of findings is attached for your review. This process should take five to ten minutes. Please do not hesitate to tell me something needs to be corrected. My sincerest goal is to accurately report the data you provided, so your feedback is greatly valued, respected, and appreciated. If the summary of findings is an accurate and truthful representation of your perceptions, no return emails are necessary. In one week from the time I send the email, if I have not received a follow up email, I will proceed. At that time, I will email you a \$10 Amazon Gift card as a thank you gift.