

2-20-2024

## High School Principals' Perspectives of Job Stressors that Influence Job Satisfaction

Lonice Priester  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Lonice Priester

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. David Weintraub, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. James Bailey, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2024

Abstract

High School Principals' Perspectives of Job Stressors that Influence Job Satisfaction

by

Lonice Priester

MA, Trinity University, 2013

MA, Trinity University, 2007

BS, Howard University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2024

## Abstract

The role of the school principal has become increasingly stressful and the problem is that school principals in a large school district in Maryland experience multiple job stressors that are contributing to low job satisfaction. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of stressors that affect their job satisfaction as well as what support systems they believe are necessary to increase their job satisfaction. An additional purpose was to identify methods that could be used to reduce such stress. Herzberg's theory of motivation, which outlines how job factors motivate workgroups, was used to guide this research. Data were collected from eight high school principals in a large school district in Maryland who have one or more years of experience as a school principal in the district. A generic data analysis was conducted based on Creswell's six steps of the generic analysis process to identify four themes associated with the participants' experiences associated with stress and the school principal role: stress is derived from expectations, need for coping and well-being, satisfaction amidst challenges, and desire for institutional educational change. Recommendations for future research include extending the scope of participants, incorporating mixed methods of research, and collecting more specific data related to stressors via survey. As a result of this research, district leaders may have the data necessary to further support school administrators in their efforts to meet district level expectations, thereby improving their overall job satisfaction. Increasing the level of job satisfaction will hopefully improve morale, thereby causing positive social change for educational leaders.

High School Principals' Perspectives of Stressors that Influence Job Satisfaction

by

Lonice Priester

MA, Trinity University, 2013

MA, Trinity University, 2007

BS, Howard University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2024

## Dedication

This study is dedicated to my three children: David, Leila, and Lynnae. You are my greatest inspiration, and I hope this journey teaches you that with passion and dedication, you can achieve all your goals. In moments of frustration and fatigue, your faces were my motivation to keep going. I wanted to show you that despite challenges, finishing what you start is worth it. One day, I hope you'll be inspired to wear the "funny looking hat" with me. Love you the best, love you the most.

## Acknowledgments

I extend my deepest gratitude to God, whose unwavering guidance has been my constant companion throughout this challenging journey. My heartfelt thanks go to my husband for his unyielding support, love, and patience; your encouragement was my anchor during tough times. I am immensely grateful to my mother, my Sunshine, for her constant praise that lifted me when I contemplated giving up.

Numerous individuals have played a significant role in this achievement, and though it is impossible to mention everyone, please know that I am forever thankful for any and all support received. A special acknowledgment goes to two friends, Felicia and Eraena, who have been my biggest cheerleaders. Felicia since childhood, and Eraena since the beginning of my principalship; you both continue to boost my confidence when I need it most.

I express my sincere thanks to the colleagues who participated in my study and made valuable contributions to my research. Finally, a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Weintraub for his unwavering support, constructive feedback, and constant availability. Your consistency played a pivotal role in keeping me motivated to push through to the finish line.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Nature of the Study.....	8
Definitions.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations.....	10
Limitations.....	11
Significance.....	12
Summary.....	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	14
Literature Search Strategy.....	14
Theoretical Framework.....	15
Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts.....	17
School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities.....	17
Stress Associated with School Administrators.....	20
Strategies to Decrease School Administrator Stress.....	21
School Principals and Job Satisfaction.....	25
Strategies to Improve Job Satisfaction.....	26



Summary and Conclusions .....	27
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	29
Research Design and Rationale .....	29
Role of the Researcher .....	31
Methodology .....	32
Participant Selection .....	32
Instrumentation .....	33
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection .....	34
Data Analysis Plan.....	35
Trustworthiness.....	37
Ethical Procedures .....	39
Summary .....	40
Chapter 4: Results .....	41
Setting.....	41
Demographics .....	41
Data Collection .....	42
Data Analysis .....	43
Results.....	44
Theme 1: Stress is Derived from Expectations.....	44
Theme 2: Need for Coping and Well-Being .....	46
Theme 3: The Need for Satisfaction Amidst Challenges.....	49
Theme 4: Desire for Institutional Educational Change.....	51
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	53

Summary .....	55
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	56
Interpretation of the Findings.....	56
Theme 1: Stress is Derived from Expectations.....	57
Theme 2: Need for Coping and Well-Being .....	59
Theme 3: Satisfaction Amidst Challenges .....	62
Theme 4: Desire for Institutional Educational Change.....	64
Limitations of the Study.....	66
Recommendations.....	68
Implications.....	70
Conclusion .....	72
References.....	74
Appendix A: Interview Questions .....	85
Appendix B: Recruitment Email.....	87

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study involved a large school district in Maryland that recently introduced required changes to ways school administrators can respond to student discipline infractions. Many administrators in the district expressed that they are feeling stressed about responding to student behaviors, and as a result, are experiencing a decrease in job satisfaction. While school principals are expected to implement district-level policies and procedures, this expectation often contributes to an increase in stress which in turn influences their overall job satisfaction (Mahfouz, 2020).

This study needed to be conducted as not enough is known about how these changes have affected high school principals' job satisfaction and stressors in responding to student behaviors or implementing district-level policies and procedures. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. The data collected could be used to identify these effects to support professional development practices implemented by district leadership. Furthermore, the data could be used to enhance the overall work environment for high school principals. Learning about the participants' job stressors could benefit the overall academic experience of both students and staff in the district where the study took place.

Sener and Boydak (2017) investigated the job satisfaction of school administrators. The researchers discussed the concept that job satisfaction is based on personal and organizational factors and found that job satisfaction levels were influenced by stress that administrators experience in their role as a school leader. They noted that further research should be conducted to determine which stress factors influence job

stress levels of school administrators.

In this chapter, I review the background, problem statement and purpose of the study. Furthermore, I identify the conceptual framework, nature and scope of the study, and limitations. The significance is also discussed highlighting the gap in knowledge.

### **Background**

There is a gap in knowledge about school principals and their perspectives on job stressors. While there have been studies on stress and school principals (Denecker, 2019; Mahfouz, 2020), the results of this study can help fill a gap in knowledge in the discipline because the data collected can be used to improve the working conditions and support for high school principals. This improvement could lead to increased academic achievement and overall school performance. In addition, gaining understanding of perceived job stress and satisfaction can also help to retain school principals as there is limited research on stress and job satisfaction among school principals as well as strategies for reducing stress among school principals.

Denecker (2019) noted the factors that contribute to stress for school principals. He found that there has been an increase in the stress that school principals experience, which is causing a decline in administrator morale, physical health, and overall job satisfaction. Furthermore, he found that school administrators are experiencing stress due to an increasing workload, time spent in meetings, and minimal additional support to implement district-level expectations (Denecker, 2019).

Other research shows that there is a connection between job satisfaction and stress. For example, Hussey et al. (2019) evaluated job satisfaction levels of

administrators and found that there was an increase in administrator job satisfaction when they received support to meet job expectations. Furthermore, the researchers found increases in job satisfaction when supervisors allowed them to use their expertise to increase student success and overall school improvement.

Another factor that contributes to school administrator stress is the lack of support from central office supervisors. Mahfouz and Richardson (2021) discussed the idea that administrators are expected not only to ensure that students are receiving a free and appropriate education but also to develop systems and structures that will ensure a safe and orderly environment along with several daily duties that have little to do with classroom instruction. The researchers found that school administrators need additional support to meet these expectations outlined by district leadership and further discussed that without this additional support, administrator morale and overall job satisfaction could be influenced. Mahfouz (2020) further suggested that school administrators believe that their stress levels are influenced by the various changes in the organization of systems and structures in their buildings outlined by central office supervisors. These changes include workload, environment, and policy and could potentially influence their morale.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem that was studied was that high school principals in a large Maryland school district experienced multiple job stressors contributing to their low job satisfaction. In this section I show the gap, both from the literature as well as evidence from stakeholders at the local research site. These stressors include changes in district-

level expectations, limited resources, and organizational structure (Mahfouz, 2020; Serner & Boydak 2017; Wells & Klocker 2018). High school principals' demands are increasingly becoming more difficult as the administrators are expected to respond to various stakeholders and adapt to changes more frequently, thus increasing job stressors they may experience (Mahfouz, 2020). Mahfouz (2020) found that a major example of stress was the need for principals to respond to the needs of students, staff, and community more often than was previously needed. This is often expected without them being provided with resources and support. Wells and Klocko (2018) found that school principals are expected to implement district policies and procedures many times without viable support and or resources to do so. Serner and Boydak (2017) found that the level of school administrators' job satisfaction is connected to rising stress levels that may develop because of such organizational structures.

The lack of flexibility in district discipline policies is a major job stressor. For example, school principals are limited in their power to suspend or expel students who demonstrate inappropriate behavior (Denecker, 2019). Riddle and Sinclair (2019) noted that the district where the study took place ranked in the top 10 large school districts for out of school disciplinary response to student behavior. The authors further noted that to decrease the achievement gap between disadvantaged groups of students and others there must be a decrease in the disciplinary gap as well.

In addition to research findings, at the local level, the school district leader announced that there would be significant changes to the school discipline policy to ensure that the district was meeting the needs of all students and finding less strict

discipline response and more strategies that involve intervention to student behaviors. This announcement led to significant changes in the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* related to out of school suspensions decreasing the infractions that students may receive an out of school suspension. For example, at the start of the 2018-2019 school year, in the district where the study occurred, a revised *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* was unveiled in which a significant number of previously suspendable infractions were removed. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, the handbook was adjusted even further, and most suspendable infractions were further eliminated. As a result, local administrators are no longer able to suspend students for many offenses that disrupt the learning environment, yet they are expected to maintain a safe and orderly space for students to learn. This has led to low job satisfaction among administrators (Assistant principal, personal communication, December 12, 2019). Wang (2020) discussed the notion that high school principals have been experiencing stress related to their roles and responsibilities and that this was influencing their job satisfaction. Further evidence for the existence of the problem of low job satisfaction can be seen through conversations at school and district-level administrative meetings. Principals and other administrators (e.g., assistant principals and wing coordinators) have indicated low job satisfaction and high stress levels during administrator meetings and how administrators are less likely to involve themselves in additional school activities because of said stress and job satisfaction (Wing coordinator, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

A principal in the school district where the research took place noted that

administrators' inability to maintain a safe and orderly environment due to the above-noted changes in school discipline policies and has asked for central office supervisors for ideas on how to ameliorate this problem (Principal, personal communication, February 3, 2020). High school principals noted that their inability to support teachers by removing unruly students from their classes, due to the new discipline policy, is a major cause of job stress (High school principal, personal communication, January 10, 2020). Teachers may ask for assistance with an unruly student and call for their removal from class; however, administrators in the district noted that they have lost some authority to remove students who disrupt the learning environment. Principals and assistant principals at all levels, as noted during administrators' meetings, expressed a decrease in their job satisfaction. Furthermore, as noted by high school administrators' weekly and quarterly systemic meeting notes, administrators' inability to remove students from the school building for ongoing disruptive behavior has had a negative influence on administrator job satisfaction as they do not believe that they are able to support a safe and orderly learning environment due to the systemic changes. The problem is particularly evident in cases where classroom teachers have requested the support of student removal from the classroom environment. I hoped to address this gap in practice with the results of my study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. To address this gap in knowledge, I invited all 21 high school principals in the district, with the intent of



securing at least 10-15 to participate in the study. I gained an understanding of the topic through a constructivist research paradigm analyzing the perspectives of the participants.

As stress among administrators continues to intensify, morale decreases causing a negative effect on job satisfaction (Lim, 2019). Lim (2019) discussed the idea that job satisfaction is closely connected to morale in that when administrators are motivated, there is an increase in overall well-being leading to an increase in job satisfaction. Furthermore, Van der Vyer et al. (2022) noted that motivation is a factor in the increase or decrease of job satisfaction (Lim 2019; Van der Vyer, 2022). The researchers identified a limited number of strategies school leaders could employ to decrease stress levels and increase morale and thereby job increasing satisfaction. By identifying additional factors that contribute to school administrators' stress and job satisfaction, the results of this study could be used by the school district to support the professional development needs of school administrators.

### **Research Questions**

The following question drove this study: What are high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Herzberg's theory of motivation (1959) was the framework that I used to guide this research. Herzberg's two-factor theory explains how job factors can affect overall job satisfaction. The two factors are those that cause job satisfaction (motivational factors), and those that cause job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors). Herzberg identified five motivational factors that determine job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, the work

itself, responsibility, and advancement. The aforementioned factors are necessary to increase job satisfaction. The two factors, achievement and recognition, which entail professional growth and praise, are necessary for there to be an increase in job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). Herzberg also spelled out additional hygiene factors that contribute to a decrease in job satisfaction: company policies, supervision, relationships, work conditions, remuneration, salary, and security (Raymond, 2018). I focused the study on motivational factors.

Herzberg's framework has been used in previous educational studies (Khanna, 2017; Nafe & Alizadeh, 2022; Park & Johnson, 2019). The researchers discussed Herzberg's theory of job satisfaction and found that while there is intrinsic motivation in school leaders, there are also external factors that contribute to motivation and overall job satisfaction. During my research, I hoped to identify both intrinsic and external stressors that contribute high school principals' overall job satisfaction. Further explanation about this framework is provided in Chapter 2.

The research question I attempted to answer incorporated two of Herzberg's motivational factors: achievement and recognition. By asking participants to share perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction, I aimed to identify strategies that will better support their ability to do the job. Furthermore, I collected data that could be used by district leaders to create an enhanced work environment for school principals. This could in turn, influence principal job satisfaction and commitment to the work.

### **Nature of the Study**

In this study, I conducted interviews to explore high school principals'

perspectives on job stressors and how they influence job satisfaction. The methodology I used to conduct this research was a basic qualitative design, or generic qualitative inquiry. Qualitative researchers aim to learn more about participants' perspectives at a particular point in time (Merriam, 2020; Yin, 2015). To learn more about current principal perspectives, I used the qualitative approach. The steps of inductive data analysis were used to analyze for ideas collected from interviews with the participants (Creswell, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and it was organized into clusters of meaning (see Creswell, 2013). I read over all the data to gain a general understanding of general ideas found in the participants' responses as well as common words. These data were organized into a Microsoft Word document with charts to begin thematic analysis.

Kambouri-Danos and Pieridou (2020) found that qualitative research is effective for analyzing the educational setting particularly as it relates to analyzing participants' perspectives. I analyzed the raw data captured in the interviews to identify themes that could be used to support district policy change and to develop professional learning plans within the school district to provide support to school administrators so that they are better able to meet expectations.

### **Definitions**

For this specific study, the following operational term were used. This is an operational term; therefore, it does not require citations.

*Administrator*—principal, assistant principal, not district curriculum directors or content area supervisors

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that all principals would be forthcoming regarding their perceptions when they participate in my interviews. I am aware that multiple realities exist for each of the participants. I assumed that all the participants have had similar experiences related to the problem.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of the research is focused on high school principals in a large school district in Maryland to explore High school principals' perspectives of job stressors and influence on job satisfaction. I interviewed high school administrators in one school district in Maryland over the course of 2 weeks. The topic of job satisfaction is critical as the results may help to reduce principal attrition. I believe the results of this research could be applicable to other school settings and that further research could be conducted in other grade levels and locations.

I selected Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation to guide the study. Herzberg's two factor theory describes how job satisfaction is influenced by motivating factors that include achievement and recognition; both are described as factors that influence job satisfaction. Initially, I considered Burn's (1978) transformational leadership theory to guide this research. Burns' theory explains how leaders can motivate work groups to execute change. Burns' framework has been used in previous educational studies to determine how this leadership style affects school climate and culture (Gulmez & Negiz, 2020). The researchers found that when leaders employ the characteristics of transformational leadership, they can revision problems and consider way to ameliorate

them which assists in decreasing the feeling of stress. While this theory could have been used to conduct the research, I believe Herzberg's theory is in better alignment with my study and research question.

### **Limitations**

One limitation to the study is that I only focused on high school administrators' perspectives. The number of high school administrators is significantly less than the number of middle and elementary school administrators. This may influence transferability of the study as the findings may not be applicable to other grade level school principals. In addition, I only conducted interviews to collect data for analysis. This is a limitation as I am a novice researcher and must employ the skills necessary to remain unbiased. Furthermore, conducting interviews only provides a limited perspective on topic being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

As an administrator in the district where I conducted the study, I have experienced some of the stressors that the principals may describe which could have created some bias as I analyzed the data. Although I have not worked in all the high school buildings where the research was conducted, I have developed collegial relationships with many other administrators which could have led to unintended bias as I am familiar with most of our high school settings. Shah (2019) noted that researcher bias often exists in qualitative research and that qualitative researchers must actively work to decrease bias by regularly reviewing the data collected and ensuring that questions that are collected are asked in a way that could lead the participant. I aimed to prevent bias from occurring by recording the interviews and asking structured questions to collect the data and taking notes in a

journal for reflection.

Limiting the data collected to interviews may have impacted transferability. The research findings may not be applied to other sites making it difficult to expand the conclusions. In addition, the participants may not have accurately reported their experience or provide objective data. To decrease the potential for bias, I asked open-ended questions that allow the participant to freely answer the questions.

### **Significance**

This study is significant because these findings may benefit high school principals in the district where the study occurred as there may be district supervisor adjustments that could decrease the stress level of school principals and increase their job satisfaction. An additional benefit, if the district applies the findings of this study, is an increase in job satisfaction which may decrease attrition. The study could help district leaders to identify contributing factors to stress and low job satisfaction.

The results of this study may help to fill a gap in knowledge among central office administrative teams and their support for principals with their perspectives on job stressors and the overall educational environment. This is also an example of positive social change, as the results of the study may enhance administrators' ability to respond to student discipline infractions.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. This study may fill a gap in knowledge among central office administrative teams and their support for principals in

the educational environment. My study addressed this gap in practice by exploring strategies to inform future policies developed by central office staff related to discipline policy and procedure. In addition, it may inform ways to reduce stressors among high school principals.

In Chapter 1 of my study, I discussed that the scope of my study and its limitations. I identified my conceptual framework as Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation which has grounded the development of my questions and supported the analysis of my data. In Chapter 2, I review current literature regarding the selected conceptual framework—Herzberg's theory of motivation . In addition, I discuss research related to stress, principal roles and responsibilities, and job satisfaction.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem is that high school principals in a large Maryland school district experience multiple job stressors contributing to their low job satisfaction. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. In this literature review I highlight administrator roles, stress related to administrator positions, and strategies for decreasing stress in administrative positions. In addition, I identify the literature search strategy and current literature that identifies key factors related to the problem, purpose, and significance of the study.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

An expansive search via the Walden electronic library was conducted to find articles for this review. I used the database filter to collect scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. This search strategy provided scholarly articles from Eric, SAGE, and ProQuest. In addition, Google Scholar was used to find articles that were not available for full view in the Walden Library. Support was also provided by the professional learning library in the district where the research was conducted to solicit additional articles for review. Both strategies assisted me with identifying approximately 60 articles related to the topic.

The following key words and phrases were used to identify appropriate peer-reviewed articles and I reviewed the articles' abstract to determine potential connection to my study: *Herzberg's theory of motivation, school discipline, school suspension, school principal perception, reduce job satisfaction, increase job satisfaction, school administrator roles, school administrator responsibilities, stress and the school*



*administrator, strategies to decrease, educator motivation, and school administrator job satisfaction.* Finally, previous dissertation reference lists as well as current article reference lists were carefully reviewed to ensure that articles within the last 5 years would guide this review and to add additional articles for review in support for each topic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation (1959) guided this research and the analysis of the data gathered and further aided the coding for this basic qualitative study. Herzberg's two-factor theory explains how job factors can affect overall job satisfaction. The two factors are those that cause job satisfaction (motivational factors), and those that cause job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors). Herzberg identified five motivational factors that determine job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. The aforementioned factors are necessary to increase job satisfaction. The two factors, achievement and recognition, which entail professional growth and praise, are necessary for there to be an increase in job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). Herzberg asked employees to explain in detail work related events that left them feeling satisfied or dissatisfied. He determined that job satisfaction derives from the right combination of these motivators and that influences satisfaction among employees (Herzberg, 1974). Herzberg's theory explains how job factors motivate work groups. Herzberg found that there are five factors that determine job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement (Gawel, 1996). These themes were considered to support the development of the interview questions and to organize

the various themes that were developed because of the data gathered from the research.

Judge et al. (2017) further attested that Herzberg's framework has been used in previous studies to explore job attitudes and factors that influence them. The researchers discussed Herzberg's theory of job satisfaction and "dissatisfiers" and they found that while there is intrinsic motivation in employees, there are external factors that contribute to motivation and thereby job satisfaction. These external dissatisfiers: company policy, supervision, salary, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions are noted as hygiene factors that may cause a decrease in motivation and low job satisfaction (Kanfer et al., 2017). The researchers note that the inability to control these hygiene factors contribute job dissatisfaction. Pratson et al. (2021) called attention to the idea that practices of a company were most important at promoting job satisfaction due the assertion that company policies may often cause the employee to lose motivation influencing job satisfaction as ineffective or inefficient to support their goals.

My rationale for using Herzberg's theory was that it is appropriate for a study regarding satisfaction and factors that contribute to their satisfaction. I conducted interviews that ask participants to describe their perception of factors that feel both satisfying to them and that would motivate them to continue doing the work they do.

However, Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory was considered to guide this research. Burns' theory explains how leaders can motivate work groups to execute change. This framework has been used in previous educational studies to determine how this leadership style affects school climate (Gulmez & Negis, 2020). The researchers found that when leaders employ the characteristics of transformational

leadership, they can envision problems and consider ways to ameliorate them which assists in decreasing the feeling of stress. While this theory could have been used to conduct the research, I determined that Herzberg is in better alignment with the problem and purpose of the study.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

#### **School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities**

School principals are expected to maintain a safe and orderly environment, and over the last several decades the response to discipline infractions that disrupt the environment has changed significantly causing a decrease in job satisfaction and increase in overall stress for school principals (Chan et al. 2019). Chan et al. (2019) explained that the focus of the school principal in the United States is largely based on two components: student achievement and school safety. While student achievement has always been an important element of the school principal role, school safety is increasingly becoming more important. Chan et al. and Fergus (2018) further noted that based on their findings, there must be a strong correlation between policy and procedure and the demands that are placed on school administrators and that when school administrators are able to meet these expectations there is a decrease and job satisfaction and motivation as well as in increase in stress.

Perceived job stressors of administrators may come because of their roles and responsibilities. Effective school leaders are expected to engage in myriad leadership practices to facilitate school improvement (Brown et al., 2018, LeChasseur, et al., 2017;). The responsibilities of the school principal are becoming more strenuous, (Hancock et al.,

2019). One of the most important aspects of a principal's role is to support teachers in their development of professional practice and enhancing the teacher self-efficacy (LeChasseur et al., 2017; Neumerski et al., 2018; Nordick et al., 2019). The expectation is that school administrators regularly visit classrooms and provide feedback to teachers regarding their instructional practices. This can be challenging as the practice for evaluating teachers changes over time with expectations consistently evolving and is noted to contribute to the deterioration of relationship between administrators and teachers (Neumerski et al., 2018; Stein & Donaldson, 2016; Youngs & Grissom, 2016).

Thessin and Louis (2020) discussed the idea that the role of the principal continues to evolve and that in addition to become well versed in curriculum and instructional practices, there is a growing expectation that school administrators will also manage operations of the school building. The researchers further note that administrators must also ensure that their building is safe and orderly for both students and staff. Additionally, principals must conduct ongoing evaluation of building level policies and structure to ensure that the school building is safe (Thessin & Louis, 2020; Youngs & Grissom, 2016).

The school principal also plays an important role in the development of the school culture (Brown et al., 2018; Chan et al., 2019). The collective efforts of the staff, particularly the teaching staff, is driven by the principals' ability to encourage collaboration between staff and teachers (Brown et al., 2018; Hammonds, 2017). Brown et al., (2018) explained how the principal's use of professional learning communities(PLCs) are critical to the development of a school culture whereby there is a

focus on community development and interaction to develop strategies for increasing student achievement. The researchers further noted that the principal must both identify appropriate professional development that effectively builds the capacity of teachers as well as helps teachers believe that the professional development is worth their time.

School administrators must identify the best way to meet the needs of the school, while also ensuring that human capital is appropriately used (Kalkan et al., 2020). Kalkan et al. (2020) gave cognizance to the importance of school administrators identifying strategies that include ways to ameliorate the ways in which teachers must deal with student behaviors by providing support through the addition of school personnel can be challenging. They further stated that this contributes to the ways in school culture is developed at the school and that many times school principals are expected to completely redirect the school culture without having the fiscal resources to do so. Furthermore, the school administrator must demonstrate the ability to collaborate with stakeholders to access community resources that may be beneficial to the school building thereby improving the culture (Nordick et al., 2019; Prado & Spillane, 2019). Nordick et al. (2019) further discussed that a principal's role in facilitating leadership--clear communication, common goals, teacher voice--is critical to the success of students and teachers and has a positive effect on student achievement and school culture. Yildirim and Sait (2019) also found that managing the expectations of multiple stakeholders contribute to stress, particularly because oftentimes administrators may be expected to engage in activities that they do not believe to be meaningful as it relates to the overall goals of the school.

### **Stress Associated with School Administrators**

School administrators engage in a highly stressful position which demands a great responsibility for students to achieve high academic results (Collie et al., 2020; Klock & Wells, 2015). Many recent studies support the contention that stress is increasingly becoming a more serious problem for school administrators and contributing to a decrease in overall job satisfaction (Mahfouz, 2020; Wells & Klocko, 2018). The expectations for the school principal continue to increase from building managers to instructional agents of change that must meet very particular expectations without sufficient authority to make decisions related to their specific building culture; this stress coupled with the notion that school leaders cannot express their feeling only increases feelings of stress (Drago-Severson 2012; Hancock et al., 2019; Mahfouz 2020:).

Robinson (2018) found that 20% of school principals are overwhelmed by the expectations of the workplace and the researcher further notes that some of this stress is due to both threats and involvement of violence at work. Robinson also found that in addition to those stressful situations, principals worked anywhere from 56-65 hours per week to meet the demands of the position because they may spend a greater part of the instructional day handling issues related to student behavior. This issue was also further validated by Yildirim and Sait (2019) as the results of their research continued to show that school principals experienced a great amount of burnout due to workload and obscurity in the role of the position. Moreover, Hancock et al.'s (2019) research findings indicated that school leader tasks, individually, do not necessarily cause stress, but that finding the time to complete these tasks contributes to stress.

The continuous changes in the role of the school administrator and ongoing school reform have also caused a tremendous amount of stress for the school leader (Diotaiuti et al., 2020; Mitani, 2018). Mitani (2018) assert that the implementation of the previously mandated No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requirement that all schools make yearly academic progress or face the consequences of losing federal funding. This has created a stressful environment for school principals in that they are expected to create an environment that develops student achievement often without being given the support and resources necessary. Mitani found that NCLB sanctions contributed to stress, burnout, and overall turnover of school principals. Furthermore, the researcher suggested that with the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), educational policy makers should reconsider support strategies for school principals.

### **Strategies to Decrease School Administrator Stress**

According to Kaufman (2019), school leaders employ multiple coping strategies to maintain mental health: problem, emotion, and maladaptive coping strategies. Problem-focused strategies involve positive and growth, use of humor and planning, while emotion and maladaptive coping strategies involve denial and a focus on venting (Kaufman 2019). School leaders employ all these strategies at some point in their decision making in response to various situations. However, the most prominent coping strategy used by school leaders in Kaufman's study is problem-focused coping which was described as the most optimal way to respond to situations that may cause stress. Participants in her study noted that when they focused on a strategy to resolve a situation rather than all the issues that contribute to the problem, they were less likely to

feel stress as a response.

Significant research notes that a poor work environment contributes to a negative influence on commitment to work and overall job satisfaction (Ahmad, 2018; Buonomo & Firoilli, 2020; Maforah & Schulze, 2012;). One of the most consistently noted concepts that contributes to job satisfaction is salary. Maforah and Schulze (2012) found that school administrators believe that their salary does not equate to the daily workload. While the participants suggested that this low salary range was not enough to cause them to leave the profession, they did assert that this should be reviewed and salary adjustments or other forms of compensation like merit increases or subsidies should be considered (Maforah & Schulze, 2012).

School principals continue to manage a high level of stress related to the expectations of their job; however, researchers find that principals are looking for ways to decrease stress (Van, 2018; Wells & Klocko, 2018). Wells and Klocko (2018) discuss the primary, secondary, and related interventions that must be considered concerning potential strategies for responding to stress: restructuring work, decreasing stress before serious medical interventions, and support for mental health. Van (2018) noted that stressors include responding to conflict, making high stakes decisions, building interpersonal relationships, and managing the budget and further discusses that secondary school administrators deal with a higher level of stress. Moreover, Wells stated that principals at both high and low performing schools struggle with the same amount of stress. However, administrators at high performing schools have identified strategies to deal with stress allowing them to perform their duties at a higher level while



administrators at low performing schools struggle to identify them.

One strategy identified by De Jong et al. (2017) to decrease job stress and increase job satisfaction is mindfulness, which means to stay focused and present in the moment. The researcher further noted that the implementation of mindfulness meditation has had a positive influence in many notable professions, like physicians, coaches, and others including school principals. Their ability to tolerate stress in the workplace thereby improving their psychological response to stressful situations has been supported by the implementation of mindfulness and meditation strategies. This strategy has been successful when workers are effectively trained in its use and when the workers are able to reflect on its effectiveness (Vonderlin et al., 2020; Wells & Klocko, 2018). This is a legitimate aspect of the effectiveness and support the notion that there must be an intentional use of the strategy.

Another strategy identified by recent research is the importance of the implementation of self-care through physical activity like exercise (biking, weightlifting and other sport related exercise on a regular basis; Hancock et al., 2019; Kaufman, 2019; Superville, 2018; Verma et al., 2020). Hancock et al. (2019) noted that the increase of endorphins created after working out contributes to the feeling of happiness and decreases thoughts of depression and stress. In addition, working out helps to improve overall physical condition of those that participate. Respondents in Hancock et al.'s (2019) research also noted that self-care included listening to music, reading the bible, and maintaining a sense of humor to take care of themselves. These findings further imply that when people can find humor in a situation, they are able to deal the negative

effects in a more positive way.

An additional strategy identified by Verma et al. (2020) is that residential yoga in school can promote improvement in the stress that occurs in school principals. This activity builds on mindfulness by adding organized physical exercises. Other research about the strategy was conducted by Superville (2018), in which the researcher discusses the idea that maintaining a work life balance through exercise, yoga and meditation, are critical to a school leader's ability to complete daily tasks that may cause a high level of stress over time. All of the aforementioned researchers' findings suggest that school leaders must take control of their needs by intentionally planning for these self-care activities.

Wells (2016) found that when principals did not receive support, in the form of targeted professional development, there is a good chance that the level of stress will increase, which might lead to low job satisfaction. In addition, Hussey et al. (2019) found that when school administrators received support from internal stakeholders there was an increase in job satisfaction among administrators. The data collected through this research may be used to benefit district leaders and their approach to the planning of professional development for high school principals.

Additional researchers found that when school leaders are provided with opportunities to collaborate there is a reduction in stress (Liou & Daly, 2018). Liou and Daly (2018) discussed the idea that school administrators can provide more support to each other through horizontal collaboration. If given the opportunity to collaborate with one another and share ideas and resources this could increase morale and overall job

satisfaction. The data obtained from this research may allow high school administrators to review strategies suggested by colleagues and employ them. This initiative could improve the administrator job satisfaction leading to positive social change.

### **School Principals and Job Satisfaction**

The concept of school administrator job satisfaction is largely connected to school administrators' well-being and without a commitment to finding ways to adapt to continued job expectations administrators will no longer flourish in the work environment (Cherkowski et al., 2020; Lim & Pollock, 2019). While well-being and flourishing hold different meanings for various groups, Cherkowski et al. (2020) found that both concepts are fundamental for school administrators in order for them to experience job satisfaction. They further found that school administrators felt a sense of job satisfaction when they can assist teachers with increasing their job satisfaction. One way to achieve this is through Positive School Leadership (PSL), which has been recently discussed by Murphy and Louis (2018). The concept is that school leaders can develop school teams through the implementation of work strategies that evoke positive ethical work relationships which adds to all well being of all community members.

Lack of autonomy was noted by Postma and Babo (2019) as another cause for a decrease in job satisfaction. This is particularly true when school leaders believe that the policies created leave them feeling discouraged and unable to do what they believe are important job tasks like maintaining a safe and order environment or supporting teachers (Ahmad, 2018; Postma and Babo 2019). Said policies that do not address the inherent issues related to student behavior or attendance contribute to this lack of job satisfaction.

Wang et al. (2018) called attention to the notion that work intensification influences job commitment and overall job satisfaction. Continued increases in expectations and the bureaucracy associated with daily paperwork and the increasingly ambiguousness of school principals have also had a negative influence on job satisfaction; although other research indicates that feelings of low job satisfaction could be alleviated by the level of school leader experience (Dicke et al. 2018; Wang et al., 2018).

Other studies have shown that school principal job satisfaction is also connected to the geographical location of the school (Chan et al. 2019; Liu & Bellibas, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). Wang et al. (2018) found that school principals in urban neighborhoods, where attendance and academic performance may be lower, and perceive a lack of autonomy to address these concerns in a way they believe is best suited for their building have contributed to low job satisfaction. The researchers further discuss that this component is more prevalent in secondary schools.

### **Strategies to Improve Job Satisfaction**

When school administrators have established a positive relationship with staff there is an increase in job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Collie et al., 2020; Lui & Bellibas, 2018). Lui and Bellibas (2018) examined the correlation between interpersonal relationships with staff and they found that respondents overwhelmingly attested to the importance of building relationships with staff and its influences on their feelings of job satisfaction. This concept indicates that overall positive relationships are connected to a positive school climate and that they can be developed by creating

opportunities for relationship building and getting to know staff members (Lui & Bellibas, 2018).

School administrators who noted they have a high level of self-efficacy related to their roles as a school principal (teacher retention, decision making, safe and orderly environment etc.), also noted they are the most satisfied in their jobs (Dicke et al., 2020; Postma & Babo, 2018; Reid 2021). Postma and Babo (2018) further noted that autonomy and the school leaders' ability to make effective decisions for their school building as demonstrated by positive response from various stakeholders builds their self-efficacy in that those results provide satisfaction of effective decision making. The researchers found that there is a significant relationship between the way a school administrator feels about the work he/she can do and job satisfaction. They noted that school principals that are given the autonomy to make building level decisions that result in a quality school environment help to increase job satisfaction. Collie et al. (2020) also noted that the varying rate of professional learning that principals engage in could contribute to higher rates of self-efficacy; meaning when school principals engage in learning about strategies for addressing student behavior, teacher concerns, and community issues they have a higher belief in themselves and their ability to perform their job. The researchers asserted that school administrators would like to participate in professional learning; however the demands of the job often prevent them from being able to do so.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The literature review focused on the following major themes: school administrator roles and responsibilities, school administrator stress, strategies to decrease school

administrator stress, principal job satisfaction, and factors to increase job satisfaction.

Cherkowski et al. (2020) found that principal well-being is an integral part of principal job satisfaction. Moreover, what is known is that well-being is affected by stress that administrators experience at work. While there are options available to school principals that could reduce stress, Wells and Klocko (2018) and Collie et al. (2020) asserted that more data is needed regarding what principals are doing to alleviate stress associated with their roles and responsibilities as well as ways to increase job satisfaction. This information could inform district level practices for supporting school principals with decreasing their perceived stress levels and increasing job satisfaction.

In Chapter 3, the methodology and study design are characterized. As well as how participants were selected, data analysis, trustworthiness maintained, a description of instrumentation and interview protocol refinement is described.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. Mahfouz (2020) noted that the increasing demands of school administrators may have a negative influence on their stress levels and in turn overall job satisfaction. In this chapter, procedures used to analyze the data collected in the study, and procedures used to discuss the trustworthiness of the study are presented. In addition, I share the research design as well as methods used to collect data.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

A basic qualitative design was used to interpret the perspectives of school administrator participants guided by the following question: What are high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction? Creswell (2013) noted that generic qualitative inquiry guides the researcher's reflective approach to analyzing the data and that this method for data collection is useful when there is a need to study perception of school personnel. For this basic qualitative study, I used Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation to guide the study in which school administrators' responses to questions regarding their perspectives were analyzed.

Qualitative studies have often been used throughout educational research as an effective means for analyzing data collected in school settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Additional researchers have noted that qualitative research allows for a greater understanding of what is happening in the education field in greater context through interviews and focus groups (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kozleski, 2017). To that end, I

conducted semistructured interviews to collect data. The rationale for selecting the basic qualitative research design for this study is that the methods outlined in this type of study align with analyzing perspectives of participants and gaining a deeper understanding of the topic. The basic qualitative design focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants involved in the study; analysis of themes, and semistructured data collection (Merriam & Tisdell 2015). These concepts guided my collection and analysis of data. This design is appropriate for my study as I aimed to glean an in depth understanding of school principals' perspectives.

Qualitative studies have often been used throughout educational research as an effective means for analyzing phenomenon in school settings and gaining a greater understanding of what is happening in the field of education through interviews and focus groups (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kozleski, 2017; Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). The basic qualitative design of my study involved exploratory work to understand the experiences of school principals that contribute to their perspectives on job stressors and low job satisfaction. A basic qualitative design is an approach often employed to examine individuals' shared experiences. This approach aligns with my purpose because it focuses on the basic understanding of the participants' experience.

Merriam and Grenier (2019) wrote about the use of generic qualitative data collection in a school setting and described three types of systematic analyses: inductive, theoretical, and thematic. I used inductive analysis of the data. There are 12 steps to conducting inductive analysis: (a) reviewing participant data, (b) review highlighted data, (c) eliminate highlighted data, (d) code, (e) cluster items, (f) identify patterns of data, (g)



identify themes of patterns, (h) arrange themes in a matrix, i) write abstract for each theme, (j) complete abstract for each participant's data, (k) combine data for all participants, and (l) synthesize themes (Percy et al., 2015)

### **Role of the Researcher**

In my role as the researcher, I conducted eight interviews with principals in the district where I also serve as a school principal. While I do have collegial relationships with other principals, I do not work in a supervisor role to the other principals and I have no power over the participants of the study. Over the course of the interview process, I worked to ensure that participants felt comfortable asking questions and seeking clarity. To prevent the possibility of imparting my bias as a current school principal, I asked general questions before asking more specific questions and I continually reviewed and evaluated the data collected throughout the process. Greenbank (2003) noted that the researcher must be freely open to information that is counter to personal biases and assumptions. The researcher's goal is to understand one's beliefs and preferences, expectations, and experiences that may preclude one's ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003). Since the researcher is coding the thematic experiences of school principals, it is vital to engage in the research topic to set aside preconceived notions about the participant, biases, and one's own subjective experiences (Roulston & Choi, 2018). In doing so, the researcher may better understand the factors that contribute to stress and low job satisfaction in a way that may inform future research and policies.

I was the sole researcher to conduct interviews and analyze the data. I did not conduct research in my own work environment, and I did not serve in a supervisory role

for the participants. I did not offer any incentives or rewards to the participants.

### **Methodology**

The form of this research was a basic qualitative study. In the next few sections I review the participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection.

#### **Participant Selection**

I selected principals from a large school district in Maryland. The principals must have had at least 1 year of experience. I identified the principals for selection based on the information that is provided via the high school websites. Using this public information, I sent emails, and made phone calls to the principals at the schools. As a current principal, I have direct knowledge of the other principals' tenure, so I was able to identify those principals at schools who have more than 1 year of experience as a school principal.

Qualitative research is conducted with a small sample to garner data (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) stated that purposeful sampling within a study may be used to select participants who meet the selection criteria rather than random selection. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that purposeful sampling is appropriate for basic qualitative studies. For my basic qualitative study, I used purposeful sampling because I needed to identify school principals in the district who have at least 1 year of experience as a school principal in the district. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that 10-15 participants are enough for a qualitative study. This number of participants has been widely accepted across studies (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Furthermore, researchers noted that in a qualitative

study where purposive sampling is used, a selection of six to 10 participants may provide adequate data for analysis (Blaikie 2018; Sim et al., 2016). My goal was to acquire 10-15 participants for the study. However, I was only able to interview eight based on participant availability.

### **Instrumentation**

Semistructured interviews were used as the single source for collecting data. I created open-ended questions (see Appendix A) that were used to collect detailed information regarding high school administrators' perspectives of job stressors and job satisfaction. The questions were generated based on ideas presented in Drago-Severson's (2012) study in which the researcher conducted a qualitative study about the ways in which school principals deal with stress and the types of professional support they believe would assist with stress. Furthermore, I developed the interview protocol to answer the research question using Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation.

Brod et al. (2009) noted the importance of establishing content validity in a study to increase generalization and to ensure that the data collected reflects participants' perspective. The researchers further noted that content validity can be established by conducting a comprehensive literature review to determine concepts that should be included in the measurement tool. I have conducted a comprehensive literature review and have identified appropriate concepts to include in the measurement tool. Furthermore, I incorporated elements Yeong et al.'s (2018) interview protocol refinement (IPR) process which has demonstrated effectiveness in developing the reliability of the interview questions.

Agarwal (2019) discussed the significance of using qualitative interviews. He asserted that this is critical to gaining quality, reliable data for coding. Furthermore, researchers must develop a reliable interview protocol to collect pertinent interview data for analyzation (Yeong et al., 2018). Yeong et al. (2018) further noted that a reliable interview protocol allows for more effective use of the interview time while gaining information for coding and increases reliability. My instrument was sufficient as I used concise, open-ended interview questions that allowed me to garner a broader response from participants. In addition, the questions were clearly connected to the research question and key themes (see Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2014) also noted the importance of establishing validity in research to ensure that the study represents effectively what is being studied. I further established validity by quoting my participants verbatim.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Appropriate approval from both Walden University and the school district where the research took place were received prior to recruiting participants for my research. As such, once I received Walden approval (institutional review board approval [IRB] # 10-19-23-1012314), I sent all possible participants, who meet the criteria described above, an email (Appendix B) to request their participation. In the email, I introduced myself and described the purpose of the study and interview procedures. I outlined the time commitment asking for 30-45 minutes for the interview and explained that their permission will be needed to record the interview. I also expressed my availability via phone or Zoom link for clarifying questions or concerns about participation in the study as needed. Once participants expressed interest in participating in the study, I asked the

participants to respond to the email and provide their signed permission form within 7 to 10 business days after they receive the email. Once they confirmed in an email reply to my message, a consent form, and relevant log in information regarding the Zoom link was sent to the participants via email. I aimed for 10 participants. However, eight principals confirmed and signed permission forms. I developed and followed a participant agreed upon schedule to conduct interviews. Each participant was assigned an alpha code to maintain confidentiality. I recorded each interview for audio using Zoom (I did not record the video). As a backup, I used the “Voice Recorder” app on my phone. Each participant was interviewed one time.

I began each session by confirming that the participant agrees with being recorded. I asked the same questions to each interviewee, not skipping or omitting any questions. I also added additional probing or clarifying questions as needed. In addition to the recording, I took written notes in a reflective journal to assist me in the analysis of potential themes. I informed participants that at any time during the collection process, participants may leave the interview without consequence. Once the interviews were conducted, I transcribed them verbatim. To maintain confidentiality, the transcribed interviews will be kept on a flash drive in a locked drawer at my personal residence for 5 years beyond completion of my study.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Once I completed the semistructured interviews, I used thematic analysis to connect participants’ responses to the research question and provide insights into the question. Creswell (2013) noted that thematic analysis is used for identifying patterns in

qualitative data. Furthermore, I incorporated the six steps of qualitative data analysis to analyze data captured from participants (Creswell, 2003). I (a) prepared the data for analysis, (b) familiarized myself with the data, (c) generated initial codes, (d) created themes and descriptions from the coding, (e) explained how the themes were used, and (f) and interpreted the data in terms of personal observation and relation to previous literature (Creswell, 2003). After the interviews, I compared the audio to the transcript to correct any errors and to familiarize myself with the data. After familiarizing myself with the data, I used Microsoft Word to chart the raw data according to each question asked in the interview. I analyzed the data through two cycles of coding to determine categories and themes which allowed me to determine the meaning of the data collected (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2014, 2021). Once I finished identifying initial codes and themes, I interpreted the data and determined alignment between findings and previous literature.

Qualitative researchers assert that there are two critical cycles when coding and analyzing qualitative data, beginning with (a) organizing transcripts into manageable chunks and then (b) continuing to organize the data into themes (Creswell, 2013; Elliot, 2018; Saldana, 2014). I employed this two-cycle coding practice to gain an understanding of perspectives identified by participants.

During the first cycle of the coding process, I used in vivo coding and read through and identified initial common words within the data collected from the participants into meaningful patterns. I then organized the data into a chart and then identified themes by chunking the data according to commonalities (Saldaña, 2014). During this first cycle, I also identified words or phrases that stood out as summarizing

what has been said by the participant (Saldaña, 2014).

During the second cycle of the coding process, I used pattern coding (Creswell, 2013). During this cycle, I identified and categorized reoccurring codes or ideas within the data collected and assigned a code to each theme. The codes were words or phrases that highlighted the pattern of themes that have been identified. There were no discrepant cases.

### **Trustworthiness**

Nowell et al. (2017) discussed the notion that for qualitative research to be considered trustworthy, researchers must establish that data analysis has been consistently and precisely conducted. Moreover, the researchers asserted that to obtain knowledge and add to the field using the human experience, a precise methodical approach must be used. The methods used to develop trustworthiness are credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, audit trails (Nowell et al., 2017).

To add further validity to my findings, I aimed incorporated the member checking process. Through the member checking process, the researcher seeks feedback from participants regarding the data collected during the interview process (Candela, 2019). I sent a summary of the findings to the participants with instructions for the participants to check for accuracy of their data and to gain a deeper understanding of their experience. I requested a response within 7-10 business days. None of the participants requested adjustments to their data.

It is imperative that researchers identify and clearly explain all steps used to conduct the research to ensure transferability of the study (Trochim, (n.d.).

Transferability is needed to increase the usefulness of the findings of the study. In chapter 1, I provided an extensive description of the site, situation and the sample used for the study. Trochim (n.d) noted that thick descriptions are critical in transferability. To that end, I also used thick descriptions of the research site and data collected so that future researchers who wish to replicate my study will have enough information to replicate my study actions.

Schwandt and Halpern (1988) also discussed the importance of noting all actions taken during the research process by clearly describing all steps taken during the interview process. Cutcliff and McKenna (2004) discussed the importance and value of conducting an audit trail to further enhance dependability and confirmability. I maintained an audit trail to ensure that the evidence of decisions is made clear, by keeping accurate records of the raw data and interview notes. The audit trail identifies the steps I have taken to ensure ethical and trustworthy standards have been met over the course of the study. Furthermore, the audit trail shows that I have taken steps to show transparency in the process by creating tables demonstrating my coding process.

Korstjens and Moser (2018) described confirmability as the extent to which data are not biased and are gleaned by the participants' responses to the interview questions. Haynes (2012) explained that reflexivity is the researcher's responsibility to maintain awareness of his/her biases and how those biases may be present during the data collection process. I continuously checked the data through an audit trail and reflexivity to ensure that my own experiences did not influence the data collected. I maintained this audit trail to allow for the dependability of my study to be assessed. Lincoln and Guba



(1985) discussed the appropriateness of keeping a reflective journal to monitor decisions made during the research process. I did the same to review my steps and followed up with my chair regarding any questions with any actions I decided to take.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I ensured that Walden University's expectations for ethical standards are met. I contacted my district's IRB for approval. Furthermore, with the assistance of the committee members, I made every effort to align practices with Walden's IRB and any federal regulations.

I invited all high school principals in my district, who have been in the principal position for at least 1 year, to participate in the study. As part of the recruitment process, I was honest about the study and ensured that participants are fully aware of the purpose of the study. I also ensured that I employed all aspects of informed consent. This means participants knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that they were aware of the benefits of participating in the study. I ensured that participants had adequate time to choose whether they wish to participate in the study and asked the same questions for all participants. It is important to emphasize that participants' participation is voluntary and any identifying information about participants will remain confidential. To that end, each participant was assigned an alpha code (A=Participant 1, B=Participant 2, and so forth). While my committee and URR had access to the data, I was the only person to collect and analyze the data. I stored the transcripts from the interviews on a password-protected flash drive and I will keep the flash drive in a locked drawer at my residence for 5 years beyond completion of my study. After 5 years I will destroy the

flash drive by using a hammer to crack it.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, I identified the methodology and basic qualitative design of the study. Zoom interviews were conducted with administrators to collect data around the topic of stressors. After data were collected, I used the six steps of generic data analysis to organize and code the data. Ethical standards and trustworthiness were implemented throughout the research. In Chapter 4, the results are presented with evidence of trustworthiness.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. The research question developed to guide this study was: What are high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction? In this chapter I will discuss details about the research setting, data collection, findings from the data analysis, and provide evidence of the trustworthiness of the outcomes.

### **Setting**

I conducted the study in a large urban school district in Maryland. The participants for the study were high school principals with at least 1 year of experience serving as a high school principal. Semistructured interviews were conducted with each participant via the Zoom video conferencing platform. No personal or organizational conditions influenced participants or their experience that would influence the interpretation of the results.

### **Demographics**

I invited 21 high school principals to participate in the study. Nine high school principals consented to participate in this study, with eight participating in the interview process. One of the principals who consented experienced a family emergency and was unable to participate in interviews. All eight principals in this study serve in the same school district. The selection criteria were that each participant must be a high school principal in the district where the study took place, and they must have completed at least 1 year in the capacity of high school principal. The average range of experience of the

principals who participated in the study is 4.75 years of experience. All the participants met the selection criteria.

### **Data Collection**

After receiving approval from both the Walden IRB (approval # is 10-19-23-1012314) and the district where this study took place, I sent all possible participants, who meet the criteria described above, an email (Appendix B) to request their participation. In the email, I introduced myself and described the purpose of the study and interview procedures. I made myself available via phone or Zoom link for clarifying questions or concerns about participation in the study as needed. However, none of the consenting participants requested to meet with me prior to conducting the interview. Once participants expressed interest in participating in the study, I asked the participants to respond to the email and provide the signed district provided permission form. All consenting participants responded within 72 hours of receiving the request, with four responding the same day. Once I received the signed district permission form from each principal, I forwarded the form to Walden's IRB.

Once Walden's IRB approved the documents, relevant login information regarding the ZOOM link was sent to each participant via email. I interviewed eight high school principals. Each participant was assigned an alpha code to maintain confidentiality. I recorded each interview for audio using the "Voice Recorder" app and downloaded the Zoom closed captioning transcription to a personal flash drive. I did not record video. As a backup, I used the "Voice Recorder" app on my phone, which is password protected, to review the interview and to compare the transcription, correcting

any errors. In addition to the recording, I took written notes in a reflective journal to assist me in the analysis of potential themes and to note any potential bias. I did not deviate from the process described in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the process of listening to the recording and comparing it to the transcript multiple times allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' responses.

### **Data Analysis**

I used thematic analysis to connect participants' responses to the research question and provide insights into the question and identify patterns in the qualitative data (see Creswell, 2013). In addition, I incorporated the six steps of qualitative data analysis to analyze data captured from participants (see Creswell, 2003). I prepared the data for analysis by listening to the audio recording while reading the transcripts and making corrections to the transcripts. Listening to the audio and making corrections to the transcripts multiple times allowed me to engage with steps one and two of the six steps as I was able to both prepare the data for analysis and familiarize myself with the data. After completing Steps 1 and 2, I moved to Step 3 and began to generate initial codes to determine categories.

Once I completed Steps 1 and 2, I began to chunk the data (see Saldana, 2014). I organized the data by developing charts in Microsoft Word. The charts were organized by rows and columns. The first chart had two columns and eight rows. I listed the transcribed responses for each participant for each question in the first column. I identified common words and phrases for each participant's responses in the second column. Then I created a second chart with eight rows and four columns. The research

questions were in the first column. The transcribed responses from each participant associated with the question were in the second column. The initial codes and phrases identified in the first step were in the third column. During the second cycle of coding, I used pattern coding to determine themes within the data collected (see Creswell, 2013). I placed those themes in the fourth column. Then, I assigned a code to each theme. As trends became prevalent, I made notes in my journal as I began to make inferences about what the data meant (see Cronin, 2012). The themes that were identified for this study are stress is derived from expectations, need for coping and well-being, satisfaction amidst challenges, and desire for institutional educational change.

## **Results**

In this section, I discuss the findings of the study based on the research question “What are high school principals’ perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction?”. During the data analysis process, the data was sorted into four themes: stress is derived from expectations, need for coping and well-being, satisfaction amidst challenges, and desire for institutional educational change. To support the findings of data analysis results, I included direct quotes and summaries of participant responses.

### **Theme 1: Stress is Derived from Expectations**

“Stress is derived from expectations”, was identified as a theme after multiple iterations of coding. Each of the participants highlighted various examples of the pressure and stress felt daily. When asked to discuss examples of stress they had at work as a high school principal, Participant A said, “Anytime that there are debates between staff that can cause a lot of stress because no matter which way you go you know, someone's

gonna be upset.". Three of the eight participants shared that maintaining a safe and orderly environment creates a feeling of stress due to various uncontrollables, one being weapons. Participant A stated the following:

Things happen that are newsworthy that can cause stress that we don't necessarily have control over. Somebody brings a gun to school. We didn't encourage them to bring a gun or ask them to bring them, but they did it. And that could end up, you know, on the news and you're stuck dealing with the embarrassment.

Participant H stated,

Safety and security are at the forefront of each and every single day...The idea that the students can, or that the environment can be compromised, given the current nature of society and the amount of violence that happens in schools.

Participant D further expressed that "I would say, for us the code of student conduct. Lack of support there and trying to support the things that are going on in the schools that have become difficult to support as far as discipline is concerned". Participants A, D, and H also noted the pressure to support academically challenged students with Participant D also stating,

For me, that's the biggest obstacle is trying to move that data needle when you know they're coming in with so many deficiencies with lack of funding, lack of educators, lack of support overall with SEL, Guidance and counseling to support those learners that are in need

While the types of stressors participants identified had some variation, all participants highlighted the overwhelming pressure arising from their accountability to

supervisors, managing staff, instructional responsibilities, and community interactions. They all noted that working to meet the needs of various stakeholders while adhering to central office expectations contributes significantly to stress. Participant F's response to the interview question "Describe some examples of stress you've had at work as a high school principal" summarizes the sentiments expressed by all participants:

Stress coming from consistent deliverables from your supervisors while trying to manage the ever-evolving deliverables of your present school. To include meeting the needs of students, Teachers, custodians, cafeteria workers, Parents, the community at large, and politicians. When those things all collide at once, it feels as though you are not able to get it all done. Then that feeling of not being able to stay on top of or stay afloat with the work is probably one of the biggest things that leads to either feelings of inadequacy or anxiety.

It's important to note that four of the eight participants expressed that they believed they were meeting compliance expectations rather than developing as a school leader. This perspective is prevalent in Participant H's response:

When you don't have the appropriate resources or enough resources or staffing or if there is no one pushing you or helping you to build your leadership around growing students academically, versus just meeting compliance tasks and deadlines, that too can also be stressful.

## **Theme 2: Need for Coping and Well-Being**

In analyzing the participants' responses, the theme of "need for coping and well-being" emerged as a crucial aspect of navigating the stressors within their role as a high



school principal. All participants shared instances of significant stress and described the strategies they employed to overcome these challenges, emphasizing the importance of maintaining their well-being amidst the demands of their role as a high school principal. Participants B, E, and F shared the importance of remaining spiritually grounded with Participant E stating, "I would say make sure that you're spiritually grounded and make sure that you develop or keep your gratitude list in front of you...and develop a high level of resilience Because you're gonna need it." Additionally, Participant B stated

For me I had to go back to my whole serenity prayer understanding what I'm in control of and what I'm not. And then doing what was the expectation of me and then knowing to let the rest of it go.

Participant F shared that it is important to stand firm on your values by stating,

And when your people see you take a stand on your own beliefs and your values, it's almost like you garner support with your people who see you breaking away from the district, and not in a way to be disrespectful but honoring the worth that's authentic to your school community.

Participant H shared that oftentimes principals need to advocate for themselves stating "So it was me deciding to have a conversation with my supervisor around what I thought was unfair and asking for some consideration." Participant A and B shared a coping strategy as being prepared. Participant B shared, "We are going to do what the expectation says according to administrative procedure or according to policy and procedure, and then just communicating with the staff about whatever it is". After

expressing a recent stressful moment, Participant A explained a strategy for overcoming stress:

I'm gonna make sure that everything we do is something that we consistently do... I'm gonna make it as difficult as possible to provide feedback to us. I determined, I'm gonna cover so much that you're gonna struggle to give me feedback...So I stopped worrying about it because I have the confidence in the work that we do every day...I overcame it with preparation.

Participants B, D, F and G mentioned the importance of consciously setting boundaries and developing systems and structures to meet daily demands. Participant B stated, "I refuse to engage in staff issues unless colleagues had directly communicated with each other." This approach aimed at preserving the participants' mental health and prioritizing personal well-being over unnecessary workplace conflicts. In addition to setting boundaries, Participant B also stated the importance reviewing and following administrative procedures to keep moving forward during stressful moments with staff stating, "I overcame it by, reading and implementing administrative procedures and policies with staff".

With time constraints noted as a stressor from everyone, all participants shared that it is important for them to delegate the tasks to capable members of the school team to ensure that they do not become overwhelmed with expectations. Participant D espoused:

What has helped me was to be able to leverage leadership...sometimes you have to delegate too...it's some other people that you can lean on to get some things

done like other teachers in the building that want some leadership roles or other educators in the building to support staff but just being able to leverage out some things to other people has been very helpful.

This approach allows for better management of the workload and demonstrated the importance of shared responsibility. I would also like to note that participants mentioned that delegating tasks can be a challenge when they do not have capable personnel working with them.

### **Theme 3: The Need for Satisfaction Amidst Challenges**

The theme, "satisfaction amidst challenges" is evident in the participants' responses, reflecting their perspectives on job satisfaction despite facing stress and challenges. When I asked them to "describe a time when overcoming stress influenced their job satisfaction", the common thread revolved around their commitment to the well-being and fulfillment in witnessing positive outcomes and the development of students.

Participant B stated:

I don't do this for adults. I don't do it for that parent that was cursing me out, I'm doing it for these kids that are in those desks every day because that's what brings me the most satisfaction in the job is working with the students. Not the staff, not the parents, all that stuff. I just love working with the kids.

Participant D stated "I think the greatest satisfaction, especially for high school, is that graduation day. Or a kid comes back and they say that something happened great, you know I made it, I got something into college". This sentiment also resonated in

Participant E's statement:

One, particular time is when a kid that was a ninth grader brought a gun to school. He really felt like there was no value to him and he was carrying it because he just didn't know if he wanted to continue like he was having suicidal and homicidal ideations. I told him that regardless of the consequences, I would be there for him when he got back. He was expelled for carrying the weapon, but he came back to school, and when he came back to school, we put him in mentoring, we stayed engaged with him. We connected with him, and we got him across the stage. So, a kid who was homicidal and suicidal, ended up getting a high school diploma and is now a productive member of society.

Participant F stated, "Regardless of challenges, I am doing what God has called me to do. There is a great deal of satisfaction in seeing that come to fruition." This response demonstrates the perspective that satisfaction also stems from reaching a personal vision and a deep sense of calling and faith. Additionally, Participant F said "My satisfaction is connected to the work that I do as a leader. Satisfaction doesn't come from completing a task, but from the quality of my work. I learn how to deal with the stress and compartmentalize it". Participant C said, "My satisfaction is connected to the work that I do as a leader". All participants noted that satisfaction does not come from the elimination of stress but rather from learning to manage it effectively. Participants A, f, G, and H believe that satisfaction is elusive but that celebrating small victories helps to continue the journey of the principalship. Participants C and D shared that the principalship is a continuation of learning and acknowledged that some satisfaction comes from overcoming challenges.

#### **Theme 4: Desire for Institutional Educational Change**

In exploring the responses of educational leaders regarding job stress and satisfaction, a prominent theme emerges – "desire for institutional educational change." This theme encapsulates participants' expressions of the need for transformative shifts in the educational system to alleviate stressors and enhance job satisfaction. The analysis of Participants' A, C, F, G, and H statements revealed various dimensions of this desire for change.

Participant A reflected on the evolution of stress levels over a decade in leadership, highlighting the importance of experience in managing stress. This narrative implies a call for institutional support mechanisms that aid leaders, especially those in their initial years, to navigate the challenges effectively. The quote, "I try my best not to get stressed and I don't allow it to bother me, I am able to do this because I am not a first year principal" emphasizes the resilience built through experience and suggested the potential benefits of mentorship programs or support structures. Participants C and G delve into the physical and mental health aspects of principalship, drawing attention to the lack of institutional initiatives to address these concerns. Participant C emphasizes the necessity for regular medical check-ups, highlighting the impact of stress on health and stated:

I was thinking about some of the things that we really need to do as principals too I think we just always need to watch out for our health...I think that we need to have medical checks done regularly. Because it does elevate blood pressure. So, I thought about this, we just need to be mindful of our medical health.

Participant G's statement emphasized a call for supervisors to reconnect with the school environment and introduce activities for decompression by stating:

I think there needs to be some true SEL for all staff, but administrators especially. We're the ones that have to lead the school, but it needs to be some true SEL, as opposed to supervisors simply saying take care of yourself you know. And take care of your families, but what does that really look like? Supervisors can ask, how can I help you? You know I've received a little bit more support in this way that I'm describing it and it's made all the difference in the world.

Participants A, C, F, G, and H expressed the need for addressing institutional issues such as compensation, workload, and support in completing deliverables. The participants recognized that satisfaction is not solely about external factors but also internal fulfillment in performance. This is noted by Participant F who stated:

I believe that in terms of satisfaction with the job there are certain things that would have to change and work together. At the top of that list, but not the end of the world is compensation. For the amount of stress that you're asking one human being to take on and serving all these different communities, what is the remuneration that is offered for a person to be able to not only take care of their families, but also reward them for stepping up and answering the call. Second When the workload is high, how are Central Office members positioning themselves to not just create deliverables for us to complete, but where is the support in completing this deliverable? And finally, having the opportunity to choose who works with you. In our school district, everyone has a union and there

are certain protections, especially for people who are not working at a high level. My inability to put people around me who have high will and skill also impacts my ability to do work and move critical data points at the time frame in which my supervisors and other central office personnel want me to do so. It's challenging, but I think those three things if we start there and we also look at policies around how we enforce rules for not just teachers but also students. All of those things may lead to more extrinsic satisfaction with the work.

Participant H provided a reflection on the need for a drastic change in the education system. Expressing frustration with the lack of innovation, the participant highlights the repetitive nature of current practices. The analogy of being a "little hamster on a wheel" highlights the cyclical challenges faced by educational leaders, emphasizing the urgency for institutional shifts that break this cycle and transform the educational environment.

Participant H further states:

There is something that needs to drastically change in the way that we educate students, and the way that we support our teachers if we're talking about the ultimate demonstration of what kids can do in terms of their skill and their success post high school, their post-secondary success. And I haven't seen that and I haven't seen anything different. The way that we're doing things is the same way that we've always been doing them for decades.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

To establish trustworthiness, I conducted a consistent and precise data analysis marked with a methodical approach (Nowell et al., 2017). I discuss the process and

strategies that I used below.

Prior to beginning the interview process with confirmed participants, I incorporated aspects of Yeong et al.'s (2018) interview protocol refinement process. I did one practice interview with another principal colleague to determine if adjustments should be made to the questions. It was suggested that I explain that the last three questions are connected to both stress and job satisfaction, which I did. To enhance the creditability of my results, I incorporated the member checking process. Once I completed the interviews, I reviewed the transcription provided by Zoom and made any necessary corrections. I sent a summary of the findings to the participants with instructions for the participants to check for accuracy of their data and to gain a deeper understanding of their experience. I requested that participants provide me with feedback within 7-10 business days. None of the participants requested any changes or expressed any concerns.

To increase transferability, I provided an extensive description of the site, situation, and the sample used for the study. I also used thick descriptions of the research site and data collected so that future researchers would be able to replicate my study (Trochim, (N.d.)

It is important that researchers note all action that are taken during the research process and that they maintain an audit trail in to further enhance dependability and confirmability (Schwandt & Halpern, 1988; Cutcliff & Mckenna, 2024). During the interview process I maintained a reflexive journal. I documented my thoughts and feelings related to participant responses, as well as ideas about emerging themes and



codes.

Confirmability is described as the extent to which data are not biased and are gleaned by the participants' responses to the interview questions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). During the research process, I continuously checked my data through an audit trail and reflexivity to ensure that my own experiences do not influence the data collected. I maintained this audit trail to allow for the dependability of my study to be assessed.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. The study focused on the question "What are high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction?". I conducted eight semistructured interviews with high school principals. After analyzing the data, four themes were identified: Stress is Derived from expectations, Need for Coping and Well-being, Satisfaction Amidst Challenges, and Desire for Institutional Educational Change. In Chapter 5, I provide an interpretation of the data as it relates to the conceptual framework and previous literature. In addition, I discuss the implications for positive social change, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. In conducting this study my objective was to answer the following research question: What are high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction?

After two iterations of coding, four key themes emerged from this study related to principal's perceptions of job stressors and job satisfaction. In Theme 1, stress is derived from expectations, principals identified that various entities (decision making, workload, lack of support). In Theme 2, need for coping and well-being, principals shared the impact of stress and strategies for coping with stress. For Theme 3, satisfaction amidst challenges, principals shared their perspectives on job satisfaction. In Theme 4, desire for institutional educational change, principals shared their thoughts on the need for institutional educational change as well as the need for enhanced direct support from central office supervisors for principals.

Within this section, I provide an interpretation of findings in relation to the literature review and the conceptual framework. I also discuss suggestions for future research and describe the potential impact for positive social change.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

In this section, I discuss the how the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge compared to what has been identified in the peer reviewed literature that was presented in Chapter 2. In the context of the conceptual framework used for this study, Herzber's (1959) theory of motivation, I interpret and analyze the findings. Herzberg's

theory of motivation is a two-factor theory that explains how two factors—motivation and hygiene—cause job satisfaction. Two of the five motivational factors, achievement and recognition have been noted as necessary to increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959).

### **Theme 1: Stress is Derived from Expectations**

In examining Theme 1, "Stress is Derived from Expectations," as identified in the qualitative study, it becomes evident that school administrators face multifaceted challenges that significantly contribute to job stress. The theme encompasses various stressors, such as safety concerns, compliance pressures, accountability to supervisors, and the overwhelming nature of roles and responsibilities. This interpretation aims to connect the findings to the existing peer-reviewed literature, specifically exploring the impact of school administrator roles and responsibilities and stress levels.

The findings align with existing literature, particularly studies by Chan et al. (2019) and Fergus (2018), which emphasized the centrality of maintaining a safe and orderly environment as a primary responsibility for school principals. The identified stressors related to safety concerns, disciplinary issues, and compliance tasks confirm the literature's emphasis on the evolving role of school administrators in ensuring the well-being of students and staff (Thessin & Louis, 2020). This alignment supports the notion that the changing landscape of discipline infractions and safety expectations contributes to increased stress levels among school administrators (Chan et al., 2019). Furthermore, this study's findings extend existing knowledge by highlighting the nuanced challenges associated with compliance tasks. Participant H's perspective on meeting compliance

expectations without adequate resources or support resonates with the literature's discussion on the evolving demands placed on school administrators (see Hancock et al., 2019). The interpretation suggests that the role of school administrators has become more complex, encompassing not only compliance but also the need for strategic leadership and resource management.

Theme 1 further connects with studies by Brown et al. (2018) and Chan et al. (2019), emphasizing the principal's role in fostering collaboration among staff and teachers. The identified stressor related to managing diverse stakeholder needs aligns with literature highlighting the importance of school administrators in developing a positive school culture (Brown et al., 2018). The theme extends this understanding by shedding light on the challenges administrators face in balancing the needs of students, teachers, parents, and the broader community, contributing to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. Moreover, the literature review by Nordick et al. (2019) and Prado and Spillane (2019) highlighted the significance of collaboration with stakeholders for accessing community resources. The interpretation suggests that the stress associated with managing expectations from multiple stakeholders may result from the perceived mismatch between administrators' meaningful contributions and externally imposed activities (Yildirim & Sait, 2019). This nuanced perspective extends the literature's understanding of the challenges administrators encounter in navigating diverse stakeholder expectations.

The findings also align with Mitani's (2018) exploration of the stressors associated with educational policy changes, such as the NCLB. The findings suggest that

the continuous evolution of school administrator roles, coupled with ongoing reform efforts, contributes significantly to job stress. The stressors identified in the study, including the pressure to improve student achievement without adequate support, resonate with Mitani's findings on the impact of NCLB on principals' stress, burnout, and turnover. Additionally, these findings confirm previous research by Diotaiuti et al. (2020), which emphasized that the stress faced by school administrators is not solely a result of specific tasks but is amplified by the challenges in finding time to complete these tasks. The study's findings extend this understanding by providing insights into the complex nature of stressors.

As it relates to Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation (1959), the achievement factor is linked to a sense of accomplishment, personal growth, and fulfillment derived from the job itself. My study's findings suggest that administrators find motivation and satisfaction in achieving tangible results, such as creating a positive school culture, supporting teachers, and navigating complex responsibilities successfully. The desire for meaningful professional development (Brown et al., 2018) also aligns with the achievement factor, emphasizing the importance of continuous growth and accomplishment in the role.

### **Theme 2: Need for Coping and Well-Being**

The theme of "need for coping and well-being" among high school principals sheds light on the various strategies participants employ to navigate the challenges of their roles and reduce stress. Analyzing these coping mechanisms in the context of

existing literature on strategies to decrease administrator stress reveals both confirmation and extension of knowledge.

Participants emphasized the significance of remaining spiritually grounded and adhering to personal values as coping strategies. This aligns with the literature on mindfulness, as noted by De Jong et al. (2017), where staying focused and present in the moment, often through spiritual practices like meditation, positively influences psychological responses to stress. The emphasis on personal values also echoes Herzberg's theory, specifically the factor of "achievement," where aligning personal values with work contributes to job satisfaction. Advocating for oneself and being prepared were highlighted coping strategies. Mindfulness practices, self-care through physical activity, and other stress-relief strategies were identified. These findings confirm the importance of incorporating self-care into administrators' routines, as noted by Hancock et al. (2019) and Kaufman (2019). The positive impact of self-care on mental health and job satisfaction aligns with Herzberg's theory, emphasizing the role of "achievement" and "recognition" in well-being.

My study confirms Kaufman's (2019) previous research that emphasized problem-focused coping. When participants engage in advocacy, they address specific issues contributing to stress, aligning with the optimal problem-focused coping strategy. Additionally, being prepared, as discussed by Participant A, contributes to a sense of control, reflecting Herzberg's factor of "achievement" in meeting expectations and overcoming challenges.

Consciously setting boundaries and delegating tasks were identified as important coping mechanisms by all participants. This confirms the findings of Liou and Daly (2018), emphasizing collaboration and support among administrators. The participants' approach to setting boundaries aligns with Herzberg's factor of "recognition," as they prioritize mental health and personal well-being over unnecessary workplace conflicts. Financial considerations, such as salary dissatisfaction, were highlighted as stressors, aligning with literature noting the impact of a poor work environment on job satisfaction (Ahmad, 2018; Buonomo & Firoilli, 2020; Maforah & Schulze, 2012). This confirms the existing knowledge that financial remuneration is a crucial aspect of job satisfaction among school administrators.

The need for support, targeted professional development, and collaboration was highlighted by participants in this study. Lack of support, as found by Wells (2016), contributes to increased stress, reinforcing the importance of support in reducing stress levels. Collaboration, as suggested by Liou and Daly (2018), supports the notion of administrators providing more support to each other, aligning with Herzberg's factor of "recognition." The coping strategies identified in this theme align with both factors. Achievement is evident in participants' preparedness, advocacy, and problem-focused coping. Recognition is reflected in the importance of adhering to personal values, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-care, all contributing to a sense of recognition and acknowledgment.

### **Theme 3: Satisfaction Amidst Challenges**

“Satisfaction Amidst Challenges”, Theme 3, among high school principals provides valuable insights into their perspectives on job satisfaction, particularly when facing stress and difficulties. The participants' focus on job satisfaction derived from working with students and witnessing positive outcomes aligns with existing literature. Cherkowski et al. (2020) emphasized the connection between school administrators' well-being and job satisfaction. The satisfaction derived from contributing to students' success confirms the idea that a sense of purpose and a positive impact on students contribute significantly to job satisfaction. The participants' statements, particularly those of Participant F, highlight the importance of personal vision, faith, and the quality of work in deriving satisfaction. This aligns with the notion that school administrators' job satisfaction is not merely tied to completing tasks but is deeply connected to the meaningfulness and quality of their work (Murphy & Louis, 2018). This confirms that administrators find satisfaction when their work aligns with their values and vision for education.

The participants' acknowledgment that satisfaction does not come from eliminating stress, but rather from effectively managing it resonates with existing literature. The idea that satisfaction is elusive but can be sustained through celebrating small victories aligns with the understanding that school principals face continuous challenges, and their ability to cope and find joy in small achievements contributes to job satisfaction (Cherkowski et al., 2020). Furthermore, the concept of PSL is introduced in the literature, emphasizing that school leaders can enhance job satisfaction by fostering



positive ethical work relationships within the school community (Murphy & Louis, 2018). The participants' focus on positive outcomes and commitment to students aligns with the principles of PSL, suggesting that a positive school culture contributes to job satisfaction.

The literature highlights factors such as lack of autonomy and work intensification as contributors to decreased job satisfaction (Postma & Babo, 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Participants' statements indirectly touch upon these factors, suggesting that policies and bureaucratic demands can negatively impact their ability to perform tasks they find essential. This confirms the existing knowledge that autonomy and manageable work expectations are crucial for job satisfaction. In addition, the participants' perspectives align with studies emphasizing the influence of geographical location and school characteristics on job satisfaction (Chan et al., 2019; Liu & Bellibas, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). The challenges faced by principals in urban neighborhoods, where attendance and academic performance may be lower, and the perceived lack of autonomy resonates with the literature. This suggests that the contextual factors of school location contribute to job satisfaction.

In Herzberg's theory (1959), the factors of achievement and recognition play crucial roles in motivation and job satisfaction. The participant's commitment to students and witnessing positive outcomes align with both factors. Achievement is evident in their contributions to students' success, and recognition is reflected in their satisfaction derived from the quality and meaningfulness of their work. The theme supports Herzberg's

theory, indicating that job satisfaction among school principals is intricately connected to both achievement and recognition factors.

#### **Theme 4: Desire for Institutional Educational Change**

The theme "Desire for Institutional Educational Change" reflects the participants' collective aspiration for transformative shifts within the educational system to alleviate stressors and enhance job satisfaction. This theme encompasses various dimensions, including the need for experience-based support mechanisms, attention to physical and mental health, and addressing institutional issues such as compensation, workload, and support in completing deliverables. The findings are consistent with existing literature on the strategies to improve job satisfaction among school administrators.

Participant A's reflection on stress evolution over a decade suggests a call for institutional support mechanisms, especially for leaders in their initial years. This aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of mentorship programs and support structures for novice principals (Postma & Babo, 2018). Experienced leaders play a pivotal role in guiding their less-experienced counterparts, contributing to stress management and job satisfaction. Participants C and G drew attention to the lack of institutional initiatives addressing the physical and mental health aspects of principalship. The call for regular medical check-ups and true Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) for administrators confirms the literature advocating for holistic well-being strategies (Collie et al., 2020). Integrating SEL and health-focused initiatives can contribute to a healthier and more satisfied leadership.

Participants emphasized the need for addressing institutional issues like compensation, workload, and support in completing deliverables. Participant F's emphasis on compensation, workload management, and the ability to choose collaborators aligns with research highlighting the connection between autonomy, effective decision-making, and job satisfaction (Postma & Babo, 2018). Participants' frustration with the lack of innovation in education and the cyclical challenges faced by educational leaders confirms literature emphasizing the need for institutional change to enhance the educational system (Collie et al., 2020). The desire for a drastic shift underscores the necessity of educational reform to align with current needs and challenges. In the context of Herzberg's theory of motivation, which identifies achievement and recognition as key factors, this theme aligns with the achievement factor. Participants expressed a desire for achievement through transformative changes in the educational system, addressing challenges, and enhancing their well-being. The literature highlighting the correlation between positive relationships with staff and increased job satisfaction (Lui & Bellibas, 2018) resonates with participants' emphasis on collaboration, supportive policies, and the ability to choose collaborators. Positive relationships contribute to a positive school climate, aligning with the achievement factor in Herzberg's theory.

The literature on self-efficacy, autonomy, and effective decision-making correlating with job satisfaction (Postma & Babo, 2018) aligns with participants' emphasis on autonomy, effective decision making, and the need for institutional support. Empowering school administrators to make impactful decisions contributes to their self-

efficacy and overall job satisfaction. Moreover, the literature suggesting a relationship between professional learning, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2020) corresponds with participants' expressed desire for opportunities to engage in professional learning that supports expectations outside of compliance. The ability to participate in learning activities contributes to self-efficacy and a higher belief in their ability to perform their job effectively.

In the analysis of the data collected related to coping strategies, decreasing administrator stress, and satisfaction amidst challenges, there doesn't appear to be any direct disconfirmation. The findings appear to align with existing literature and theories, providing further support and context to the understanding of the challenges and coping mechanisms experienced by high school principals. However, it is essential to note that the absence of disconfirmation in the provided content does not necessarily mean it is not present. A more comprehensive analysis may be required, and a thorough examination of the literature and specific details within the data could reveal distinctions that may challenge or disconfirm certain aspects.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study was that the focus of this study was solely on high school administrators. The disparity in numbers between high school administrators, middle, and elementary school administrators raises concerns about the transferability of the findings. With a significantly smaller pool of high school administrators, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other educational levels as the

perspectives and stressors unique to middle and elementary school administrators may not be adequately represented in this study.

Another limitation that I encountered was the challenge in recruiting participants, leading to a limited sample size. Out of the 21 eligible high school principals, only 8 were available for interviews. This may introduce selection bias, and the experiences and coping mechanisms of those who did not participate might differ, impacting the comprehensive understanding of the research question.

In addition, as an administrator within the district where the study was conducted, my perspective could introduce bias. Having experienced some of the stressors discussed by the participants may influence the interpretation of the data. My pre-existing collegial relationships with other administrators could inadvertently shape the analysis, potentially leading to unintended bias. While efforts were made to mitigate bias by recording interviews, asking structured questions, and maintaining reflective journals, the risk of bias remains inherent in this qualitative study.

The exclusive reliance on interviews as the primary data collection method poses another limitation. Interviews, while rich in providing in-depth insights, offer a subjective and limited perspective on the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This limitation may impact the study's ability to draw broad conclusions and hinder the generalizability of the findings to other contexts.

Finally, limitation arises from the absence of participant feedback on the collected data via the member checking process. While I made efforts to engage participants in a reflective dialogue about their responses, the lack of direct feedback may have limited my

ability to ensure the accuracy and depth of the interpretations. Participant feedback could have provided me with more valuable insights into the participants' perceptions of how their experiences were represented and interpreted, enhancing the rigor of the study.

### **Recommendations**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. Given the narrow focus on high school administrators in my study, I recommend future studies should extend the scope to include middle and elementary school administrators. Understanding the nuances and stressors unique to different educational levels can provide a more comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by school administrators across the board. In addition, I would suggest expanding the number of participants beyond the number that were interviewed for this study.

Chan et al. (2019) and Fergus (2018) highlighted the correlation between policy and procedure alignment and school administrators' stress levels. I further recommend research into the specific policies and procedures that impact administrators and how alignment or misalignment influences their job satisfaction and stress levels. This could inform policy recommendations for educational institutions. Thessin and Louis (2020) emphasized the evolving role of principals, including managing school culture and operations. Future research could explore effective strategies and interventions that support principals in these evolving responsibilities, considering the impact on stress levels and job satisfaction.

Cherkowski et al. (2020) discussed PSL as a potential contributor to administrator job satisfaction. I recommend further research delve into the specific strategies and practices associated with PSL, examining how it fosters positive ethical work relationships and influences the well-being of administrators. Additionally, Wells (2016) and Hussey et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of professional development and support for school administrators. I recommend future researchers investigate the specific types of professional development that are most effective in reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction among administrators. As noted by all participants in my study, understanding the role of internal stakeholder support could also be a focus of exploration.

Liou and Daly (2018) suggested that school administrators can benefit from horizontal collaboration. Future research should collect data regarding collaborative strategies among administrators, exploring how sharing ideas and resources impacts morale and overall job satisfaction. This could provide practical insights for fostering a collaborative culture.

Finally, I recommend future research incorporate a mixed methods approach as this may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research question (Dawadi et al. 2021). For example, a survey could assess any correlation between specific stressors and job satisfaction. In addition, adding a longitudinal analysis would allow researchers to study the impact of stressors and job satisfaction across different phases of a participant's career path.

## **Implications**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction. The findings identified challenges and stressors faced by high school administrators and a nuanced understanding of their complex roles and responsibilities (Hancock et al., 2019). The findings present an opportunity for transformative positive social change in education. One significant avenue for change lies in policy advocacy. By recognizing the multifaceted stressors, educational policymakers can work towards streamlining bureaucratic demands and providing the necessary resources and support structures. This move can alleviate the burden on administrators, contributing to a more conducive work environment and, subsequently, enhancing their overall job satisfaction.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of continuous professional development for school administrators. The desire for meaningful growth and accomplishment aligns with Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation. Investing in targeted professional development programs can empower administrators, fostering a sense of achievement and recognition. School districts can facilitate workshops, training sessions, and mentorship programs to ensure administrators stay abreast of evolving educational practices. This initiative not only contributes to administrators' job satisfaction but also enhances their effectiveness in navigating the challenges of educational leadership possibly increasing student achievement.

Cultivating collaborative school cultures emerges as another avenue for positive change. The study highlights the principal's role in fostering collaboration among staff



and teachers. Institutions can encourage a collaborative approach by implementing practices that promote positive relationships and effective teamwork. This cultural shift can positively impact school environments, creating a sense of community and shared responsibility which is essential to administrator job satisfaction (Lui & Bellibas, 2018). By aligning institutional practices with the participants' emphasis on collaboration, educational institutions can contribute to a more supportive and satisfying work environment for administrators.

In addition to addressing immediate stressors, participants advocate for a holistic approach to well-being. If district leaders incorporate the strategies shared like mindfulness practices, self-care initiatives, and health-focused programs identified in the study, they can significantly contribute to administrators' coping mechanisms and overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the call for institutional changes related to compensation, workload, and support presents an opportunity for systemic reform. While school districts may be unable to increase salary, fair compensation, effective workload management, and institutional support can directly influence administrators' job satisfaction and, consequently, their commitment to their roles. Positive social change in education, as highlighted by the study, necessitates a comprehensive and ongoing commitment to addressing the identified challenges and aspirations of high school administrators. Through a combination of policy reforms, professional development initiatives, cultural shifts, and holistic well-being programs, educational institutions can create an environment that fosters the success and satisfaction of school principals.

## Conclusion

This qualitative study provides insights into the dynamics of principal perspectives on job stressors and their profound impact on job satisfaction. The exploration of challenges, coping mechanisms, satisfaction, and aspirations provides valuable insights into the nuanced world of high school administrators. The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of the complex factors influencing principal job satisfaction, thereby paving the way for positive interventions and improvements in the educational landscape.

Understanding the challenges and stressors faced by principals is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the multifaceted nature of their roles, encompassing safety concerns, compliance pressures, stakeholder management, and evolving educational policies. This knowledge is instrumental in aligning institutional expectations with the intricate realities of administrators, fostering a more realistic and supportive work environment. Moreover, the study identifies effective coping mechanisms employed by administrators. Insights into mindfulness practices, self-care strategies, and collaborative approaches provide actionable information for schools and districts to implement supportive initiatives. By acknowledging the importance of personal values, self-advocacy, and setting boundaries, educational institutions can contribute to the well-being of principals, ultimately enhancing their job satisfaction. The findings also underscore the deep connection between job satisfaction and a sense of purpose derived from contributing to students' success. Recognizing this link is pivotal for educational policymakers and institutions aiming to improve administrator

satisfaction. By aligning policies and practices with administrators' aspirations and acknowledging their achievements, institutions can create an environment that fosters a positive outlook, job fulfillment, and sustained commitment. The results of this study provide a roadmap for educational institutions to address the identified challenges, implement supportive measures, and strive for transformative shifts.

## References

- Agarwal, U. A. (2019). Qualitative interviewing. In R. N. Subudhi & S. Mishra (Eds.), *Methodological issues in management research: advances, challenges, and the way ahead*, (pp. 79-91). <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78973-973-220191006>
- Ahmad, M. (2018). Influence of transformational leadership styles of principals on job satisfaction of secondary school teachers. *Putaj Humanities & Social Sciences*, 25(2), 41-50.
- Blaikie, N. (2018). Confounding issues related to determining sample size in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(5), 635-641.
- Brod, M., Tesler, L. E., & Christensen, T. L. (2009). Qualitative research and content validity: developing best practices based on science and experience. *Quality of Life Research*, 18, 1263-1278.
- Brown, B. D., Horn, R. S., & King, G. (2018). The effective implementation of professional learning communities. *Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership*, 5, 53-59.
- Buonomo, I., Benevene, P., & Fiorilli, C. (2020). Meaning of work in a group of school principals: the role of organizational variables. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 32(6), 389-403.
- Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *Qualitative Report*, 24(3), 619-628.
- Chan, T. C., Jiang, B., Chandler, M., Morris, R., Rebisz, S., Turan, S., Shu Z. & Kpeglo, S. (2019). School principals' self-perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in

- six countries. *New Waves-Educational Research and Development Journal*, 22(2), 37-61.
- Cherkowski, S., Kutsyuruba, B., & Walker, K. (2020). Positive leadership: Animating purpose, presence, passion and play for flourishing in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 58(4), 401-415.
- Collie, R. J., Granziera, H., & Martin, A. J. (2020). School principals' workplace well-being: A multinational examination of the role of their job resources and job demands. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 58(4), 417-433.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). A framework for design. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 9-11.
- Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed). SAGE
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124.
- Cutcliffe, J. R., & McKenna, H. P. (2004). Expert qualitative researchers and the use of audit trails. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45(2), 126-133.
- Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: A discussion on its types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25-36.
- De Jong, D., Grundmeyer, T., & Yankey, J. (2017). Identifying and addressing themes of

- job dissatisfaction for secondary principals. *School Leadership & Management*, 37(4), 354-371.
- Denecker, C. (2019). School principals' work stress in an era of new education governance. *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, 45(3), 447.
- Dicke, T., Marsh, H. W., Riley, P., Parker, P. D., Guo, J., & Horwood, M. (2018). Validating the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ-II) using set-ESEM: Identifying psychosocial risk factors in a sample of school principals. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 584.
- Dicke, T., Marsh, H. W., Parker, P. D., Guo, J., Riley, P., & Waldeyer, J. (2020). Job satisfaction of teachers and their principals in relation to climate and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(5), 1061.
- Diotaiuti, P., Mancone, S., Bellizzi, F., & Valente, G. (2020). The principal at risk: stress and organizing mindfulness in the school context. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(17), 6318.
- Drago-Severson, E. (2012). The need for principal renewal: The promise of sustaining principals through principal-to-principal reflective practice. *Teachers College Record*, 114(12), 1-56.
- Elliott, V. (2018). Thinking about the coding process in qualitative data analysis. *Qualitative Report*, 23(11), 2850-2861.
- Fergus, E. (2018). The role of policy in promoting efficient and quality discipline reform. *School Psychology Review*, 47(2), 199-202.
- Gawel, J. E. (1996). Herzberg's theory of motivation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

*Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 5(1), 11.

Greenbank, P. (2003). The role of values in educational research: The case for reflexivity.

*British Educational Research Journal*, 29, 791- 801.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192032000137303>

Hammonds, T. (2017). High Teacher Turnover: Strategies School Leaders Implement to

Retain Teachers in Urban Elementary Schools. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 10(2).

Hancock, D. R., Müller, U., Stricker, T., Wang, C., Lee, S., & Hachen, J. (2019). Causes of stress and strategies for managing stress among German and US principals.

*Research in Comparative and International Education*, 14(2), 201-214.

Haynes, K. (2012). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Organizational*

*Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*, 26, 72-89.

Hong, J., & Cross Francis, D. (2020). Unpacking complex phenomena through

qualitative inquiry: The case of teacher identity research. *Educational Psychologist*, 55(4), 208-219.

Hussey, W. J., Thomas, S. H., Anderson, K., & Algozzine, B. (2019). A survey of

responsibilities, workload, and satisfaction of administrators of special education.

*Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 32(2), 117–128.

Judge, T. A., Weiss, H. M., Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., & Hulin, C. L. (2017). Job

attitudes, job satisfaction, and job affect: A century of continuity and of change.

*Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 356.

Kalkan, Ü., Altınay Aksal, F., Altınay Gazi, Z., Atasoy, R., & Dağlı, G. (2020). The

- relationship between school administrators' leadership styles, school culture, and organizational image. *Sage Open*, 10(1), 2158244020902081.
- Kambouri-Danos, M., & Pieridou, M. (2020). Qualitative doctoral research in educational settings: Reflecting on meaningful encounters. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(1), 21-31.
- Kanfer, R., Frese, M., & Johnson, R. E. (2017). Motivation related to work: A century of progress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 338.
- Kaufman, J. A. (2019). Stress and coping among public school principals in a midwest metropolitan sample. *SAGE Open*, 9(1), 2158244019829549.
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical teacher*, 42(8), 846-854.
- Klocko, B. A., & Wells, C. M. (2015). Workload pressures of principals: A focus on renewal, support, and mindfulness. *NASSP Bulletin*, 99(4), 332-355.
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124.
- Kozleski, E. B. (2017). The uses of qualitative research: Powerful methods to inform evidence-based practice in education. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 42(1), 19-32.
- LeChasseur, K., Donaldson, M., Fernandez, E., & Femc-Bagwell, M. (2018). Brokering, buffering, and the rationalities of principal work. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(3), 262-276.



- Lim, L. (2019). Work Intensification and the Secondary Vice-Principal Role. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (190).
- Lim, L. and Pollock, K. (2019), “Secondary principals’ perspectives on the influence of work intensification on the secondary vice-principal role”. *Leading and Managing*, 25(9), 80-98.
- Lincoln, YS. & Guba, EG. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Liou, Y. H., & Daly, A. J. (2018). Broken bridges: a social network perspective on urban high school leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(5), 562-584.
- Liu, Y., & Bellibas, M. S. (2018). School factors that are related to school principals’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 90, 1-19.
- Maforah, T. P., & Schulze, S. (2012). The job satisfaction of principals of previously disadvantaged schools: new light on an old issue. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(3), 227-239.
- Mahfouz, J. (2020). Principals and stress: Few coping strategies for abundant stressors. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(3), 440–458.
- Mahfouz, J., & Richardson, J. W. (2021). At the crossroads: Wellbeing and principalship preparation. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 16(4), 360-384.
- Martinez, J. A. (2020). A Call for help: How public school principals’ subjective report of institutional weakness relates to disciplinary incidents. *Journal of School Violence*, 19(4), 446-455.

- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome St, San Francisco, CA 94101.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*, 1(1), 1-17.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research : a guide to design and implementation* (Fourth edition.). Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.
- Murphy, J. F., & Louis, K. S. (2018). *Positive school leadership: Building capacity and strengthening relationships*. Teachers College Press.
- Neumerski, C. M., Grissom, J. A., Goldring, E., Rubin, M., Cannata, M., Schuermann, P., & Drake, T. A. (2018). Restructuring instructional leadership: How multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems are redefining the role of the school principal. *The Elementary School Journal*, 119(2), 270-29.
- Nordick, S., Putney, L. G., & Jones, S. H. (2019). The principal's role in developing collective teacher efficacy: A cross-case study of facilitative leadership. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 13(4).
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847.
- Percy, W.H., Kostere, K., & Kostere, S. (2015). Generic qualitative research in psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, 20, 76-85.

- Postma, K. L., & Babo, G. (2019). The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Principal Job Satisfaction: A Study of One Northeastern USA State. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, 47(1).
- Prado Tuma, A., & Spillane, J. P. (2019). Novice School Principals Constructing Their Role Vis-À-Vis External Stakeholders:(Not) Attempting to Be “All Things to All People”. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 55(5), 812-840.
- Pratson, D., Stern, M. J., & Powell, R. B. (2021). What organizational factors motivate environmental educators to perform their best?. *The Journal of Environmental Education* 52(4), 256-271.
- Reid, D. B. (2021). US principals’ sensemaking of the future roles and responsibilities of school principals. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(2), 251-267.
- Riddle, T., & Sinclair, S. (2019). Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(17), 8255-8260
- Roulston, K., & Choi, M. (2018). Qualitative interviews. In U. Flick *The sage handbook of qualitative data collection*, 233-249.
- Saldaña, J. (2014). Coding and analysis strategies.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*, 1-440.
- Savage, T. N., & McIntosh, A. S. (2017). Tackling reliability and construct validity: the

systematic development of a qualitative protocol for skill and incident analysis.

*Journal of Sports Sciences*, 35(5), 449-456.

Schwandt, T. A., & Halpern, E. S. (1988). *Linking auditing and metaevaluation:*

*Enhancing quality in applied research*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Sener, G., & Boydak Özcan, M. (2017). *Investigation of job satisfaction levels of school*

*administrators and teachers*. Online Submission, 3(3), 297–311.

Sim, J., Saunders, B., Waterfield, J., & Kingstone, T. (2018). Can sample size in

qualitative research be determined a priori?. *International Journal of Social*

*Research Methodology*, 21(5), 619-634.

Stein, M.P. and Donaldson, M.L. (2016), The new educational accountability:

understanding the landscape of teacher evaluation in the post-NCLB era,

*Education Finance and Policy*, 11(3), 340-359.

Superville, D. R. A principal who conquered burnout. *Education Week*, 38(9), 11.

Thessin, R. A., & Louis, K. S. (2020). Is professional learning keeping up? *The Learning*

*Professional*, 41(2), 40-46.

Trochim, P. W. M. K. (n.d.). *Qualitative validity*. Research Methods Knowledge Base.

2006.

Van der Vyver, C. P., & Geduld, B. W. (2022). Self-determination theory as a lens to

explore motivational factors and leadership influences in sustainable school

improvement: A South African case. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(1),

1–9.

Van Vooren, C. (2018). An Examination of K-5 Principal Time and Tasks to Improve

- Leadership Practice. *Educational Leadership and Administration: teaching and program development*, 29(1), 45-63.
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC medical research methodology*, 18(1), 1-18.
- Verma, A., Shete, S. U., & Doddoli, G. (2020). Influence of residential yoga training on occupational stress and health promotion in principals. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 9.
- Vonderlin, R., Biermann, M., Bohus, M., & Lyssenko, L. (2020). Mindfulness-based programs in the workplace: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Mindfulness*, 11(7), 1579-1598.
- Wang, F. (2020). Principals' Self- and Interpersonal Leadership Amid Work Intensification. *Journal of School Leadership*, 31(5), 396-427.
- Wang, F., Pollock, K. E., & Hauseman, C. (2018). School principals' job satisfaction: The effects of work intensification. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 185, 73.
- Yeong, M. L., Ismail, R., Ismail, N. H., & Hamzah, M. I. (2018). Interview protocol refinement: Fine-tuning qualitative research interview questions for multi-racial populations in Malaysia. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(11), 2700-2713.
- Yildirim, F., & Sait Dinc, M. (2019). Factors influencing burnout of the principals: a pilot study in Flemish schools of Belgium. *Economic research-Ekonomska*

*istraživanja*, 32(1), 3538-3553.

Yin, R. K. (2015). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford publications.

Youngs, P. and Grissom, J.A. (2016), *Improving Teacher Education Systems: Making the Most of Multiple Measures*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

## Appendix A: Interview Questions

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. I will be asking you 8 questions one at a time. At any time, you may skip or refuse to answer a question. If you would like me to repeat a question, I can also do that at any time during the interview. Do I still have your permission to record this interview? While we are recording, I will also be taking notes in my journal. Do you have any questions before we start?

### **Research Question:**

What are high school principals' perspectives of job stressors that influence job satisfaction?

### **Interview Questions:**

1. How would you describe job stress?
2. Describe some examples of stress you have had at work as a high school principal.
3. Think of the most recent event that has caused you stress at work. How did you overcome that stressful event?
4. Describe instances when you have felt unsupported by members of the school district's central leadership team, leading to greater stress. How did you address these incidences?
5. Describe how your ability to overcome stress at work helped to improve your job satisfaction.
6. Describe a time when overcoming stress increased your job satisfaction.

7. Describe times you have felt the expectations of your role were insurmountable.  
(Follow-ups) Discuss the steps you have taken to meet those expectations. How have these steps influenced your job satisfaction?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?



## Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Hello,

I am reaching out to you for support in my doctoral journey and would appreciate your insight as a participant in the research study.

My dissertation topic is "High School Principal's Perspectives of Job Stress and how it Influences Job Satisfaction". I am in the data collecting process and need to interview school principals. The interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be conducted virtually on either Google Meet or Zoom (your preference). I am flexible in setting up the interview dates and times, so the interview can be scheduled at your convenience. Please let me know of a suitable time so that I may send you a calendar invite. I look forward to hearing from you for a suitable time within the next 3-5 business days.

If you are available, I would also appreciate it if you could please sign the attached consent form and forward them to me before the interview.

Once again, thank you for your time and consideration, and please let me know if you have any questions or would like to speak with me directly. My cell number is 202-247-8432.