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Abstract Middle School Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Administrative Support and Online Teaching During the COVID-19

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2024

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by

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MA, Valdosta State University 2018

B.A., University of North Florida 2007

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

During the spring of 2020, a South Georgia school implemented distance learning due to COVID-19, with little administrative support for the teachers for online instruction. This quick transition may have impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs, while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was rooted in Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Venkatesh's Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. The research questions investigated how administrative support and experience with technology may have impacted teachers' personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the pandemic. Interviews of eleven middle school teachers, who worked in a rural Georgia school, were transcribed and analyzed. Analysis revealed significant themes regarding teacher relationship with technology, lack of student involvement, student accessibility to technology, administrative communication, administrative expectations, and perceptions of administrative efficacy as significant factors impacting the teaching self-efficacy of respondents. A white paper report was developed to present recommendations for addressing the issues. Implications for positive social change include a better understanding of how administrators and district responses to crises impact teacher self-efficacy and the development of an emergency closure plan, including guidelines on supporting teachers as they continue classes remotely.

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Dedication

This page is dedicated to my late Mother and Father, Sharron and Vernon Lee Wright. Thank you for all the love and support and for always believing in me. I love you both, beyond words.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my wonderful partner Jesse Lee for your unconditional love, and support. You are patient beyond words, thank you for believing in me, I love you to the moon and beyond. Finally, thank you to Dr. McCraney and Dr. Orr. for your guidance and support, I couldn't have done it without you two.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problem addressed through this study was middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction, and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The local problem was that a South Georgia school implemented distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with little administrative support provided to the teachers for online instruction. This quick transition may have impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online. It is unknown how the lack of administrative support impacted teachers' self-efficacy for online instruction during the pandemic. This study investigated teachers' memories of their self-efficacy for online teaching during the pandemic to find the issues that impacted their confidence.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges to the field of education. As state and local governments sought to find strategies to mitigate infection, the choice to close schools across the United States seemed like the only viable option. By April 2020, public schools across the United States were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic; many initialized remote learning. Distance learning in public schools revealed many challenges for teachers (Martin et al., 2022). Despite the issues, many teachers were expected to teach online courses with little preparation time or instructions on engaging students in the virtual classroom (Webb et al., 2021). While necessary, the decision to close schools may have impacted teaching and learning for years to come (Wyse et al., 2020).

Teacher self-efficacy beliefs is described as an educator's personal belief in the ability to effectively impact student achievement (Lazarides et al., 2021). According to Bandura (1977) observation, mastery, positive affirmation, and physiological effects develop self-efficacy beliefs. If teachers lack support and professional development for new methods in teaching, it may impact their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely. Negative beliefs of teacher self-efficacy may have stemmed from parent communication, administrative support, and teacher anxiety (Pressley, 2002). In addition, the quick transitions to online learning forced teachers to implement learning platforms that they had little experience implementing, placing much stress on educators (Pressley, 2002). The negative impacts of poor teacher self-efficacy may have hurt student achievement (Prewett & Whitney, 2021).

In July of 2020, the State government issued a statement concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving the State Superintendent authority to suspend all state accountability measures (Georgia Department of Education, 2020). According to the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE, 2020), the State Department of Education gave local districts the authority to use the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) for local teacher evaluations, to assess teachers during the pandemic and to use the results as necessary (PAGE, 2020). The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System is a state-wide teacher evaluation program that provides teachers with adequate feedback for implementing best practices within the classroom. There are three components of TKES, which make up a teacher's overall effectiveness in the classroom: teacher assessments 50%, student growth 30%, and professional development 20% (GADOE.org).

Collectively, these ratings help determine the teacher's effectiveness on an annual basis. The decision allowed districts to evaluate teachers using the TKES platform, even when teachers were not trained or experienced in remote teaching. During school closures, The Georgia Department of Education continued to promote evaluation systems to monitor the effectiveness of teachers as they attempted to continue instruction remotely.

While reviewing local correspondence within the local middle school, many educators within the school shared concerns about how school closures impacted their ability to teach effectively (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020). Most notably, teachers cited the need for more student equity during distance learning, clear expectations on conducting classes online, and the lack of guided support for teaching remotely from administrators (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020). School minutes obtained from a meeting conducted in April of 2020 revealed frustration amongst teachers at the school. Among the concerns included student inequity related to access to the internet, providing supplemental assistance to students with special needs, and clear expectations for student evaluations (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020). According to the meetings, the district felt it was not financially feasible to provide students with the technology they needed to participate in classes (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020 faculty). Therefore, students who did not have access to the internet or technology at home were expected to complete work packets without the guidance of their teachers. During the pandemic, the use of self-guided workbooks as a substitute for online learning was not uncommon for families who did not have access to technology (Nicola et al., 2020). The guidelines provided by the administration

concerned many of the teachers within the meeting, who recognized that most of the students who did not have access to technology were already considered “at-risk” (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020).

Limiting “at-risk” students’ access to resources places more strain on the student achievement gap, by forcing them to rely on family members for academic support rather than their teachers (Goudeau et al., 2021). The link between teacher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching and student ability is critical in understanding how students achieve. Teacher confidence accurately indicates student performance (Poulou, et al., 2019). The concerns cited in the meeting may have indicated doubt in the teachers’ ability to impact student achievement effectively. Subsequently, remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected teachers' confidence in positively impacting student achievement.

Rationale

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs, while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial projections on school closures due to the pandemic indicate a significant negative impact on schools and students (Azevedo et al., 2021). The crisis may have left some educators unconfident in solely relying on technology to instruct students.

While there is much research on how COVID-19 has impacted the integration of online learning environments in schools, few focused on the impact it has made on the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in remote teaching. A survey conducted by Martinez and Broemmel (2020) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively

impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Many teachers who participated in the survey mentioned that limited student-teacher connections and the inability to fully help students significantly negatively impact their self-efficacy beliefs, thus impacting teacher motivation (Martinez & Broemmel, 2020). School closures' impact on teacher efficacy is an essential topic to research because teacher self-efficacy is a critical component of student achievement (Presley & Ha, 2021).

Definition of Terms

Several terms are related to teacher self-efficacy beliefs and distance learning. For a better understanding of the content of the study, the following terms are defined in the context of the study. The following is a list of words deemed central to the topic.

Administrative support: Support and guidance from the local district and principal of the school. Various types of support are included but are not limited to instructional advice, resources, expectations, clear communication of protocols, and emotional support (Pressley, 2021).

COVID-19 Pandemic: The global outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 which occurred in early spring of 2020. (Sheposh, 2021).

Distance learning/online learning: The delivery of instructional resources to students using an electronic device and the internet (Montelago, 2019).

E-learning: E-learning is a learning method in which the learner is engaged in instructional presentations and interactive lessons using text, streaming, webcam services, and file sharing to exchange information (Lundin, 2021).

Emergency Remote Teaching ERT: An abrupt disruption in face-to-face learning due to an emergency school shutdown (Trust & Whalen, 2021).

Self-efficacy Beliefs (SEB): A personal belief that an individual can or cannot achieve something. Self-efficacy is the central idea of Bandura's efficacy theory which cites self-efficacy as the chief indicator of how an individual approaches a task (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's theory states that self-efficacy is developed through the experience of personal mastery, positive verbal affirmations, and observation of successes by other people (Yancy, 2021).

Teacher Self-Efficacy beliefs: Teacher self-efficacy utilizes Bandura's (1977) theory on self-efficacy to indicate the self-efficacy levels of educators. Teacher self-efficacy may be described as an educator's belief that they can help their students achieve. As the theory on self-efficacy states, various factors help predetermine the confidence of a teacher's ability to help students succeed, including teacher enthusiasm and preparedness (Lazarides et al., 2021).

Significance of the Study

The impact of the global pandemic proved more catastrophic than initially perceived. This affected many facets of day-to-day life. The problem left educators navigating through uncharted terrain. While it is fair to suggest that with all crises comes the notion of unknowing what changes the future may hold, the ability to adapt to swiftly change is critical.

This research is significant as it provided insight into how school administrative support may have impacted teachers and their ability to teach during emergency school

closures. Teacher planning and preparedness impact teacher self-efficacy, thus affecting student learning. Therefore, school and teacher emergency preparedness must be a top priority for school districts. In addition, as threats such as global pandemics, natural disasters, and political turmoil become increasingly prevalent, understanding how the pandemic played a role in administrative support for teachers is essential to creating future safeguards for seamless transitions to different learning modalities.

Research Questions

This study investigated the problem of middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. To study this problem, the following research questions were aligned to the problem and purpose:

Research Question 1 (RQ1) What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question 2 (RQ2) What are middle school teachers' perceptions about how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs, while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy for researching literature focused on linking theories to self-efficacy to teaching

remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, extensive literature research on self-efficacy, remote-teaching, distance learning, and COVID-19 was executed. Databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, ProQuest, and the Walden University Library provided many insightful peer-reviewed resources utilized in the study. The challenge of the research was to remain in the timeframe in which the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. The following keywords to assist in the research were used to search for relative and reliable peer-reviewed articles: self-efficacy, remote teaching, distance learning, pandemic and education, teacher self-efficacy beliefs and COVID-19, school closures and COVID-19, self-efficacy and COVID-19, school closure and pandemic, COVID-19 and school administration, professional development, technology, teacher self-efficacy and COVID-19, and administration and teacher self-efficacy belief. A total of 50 published journals meeting the criteria were reviewed. This literature review consists of (6) sections focused on the following themes: *(a) factors impacting teacher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching, (b) teacher experiences and perceptions of remote teaching and distance learning during the pandemic, (c) administrative support for teachers during pandemic school closures, (d) Teacher perceptions of professional development in response to school closures during the pandemic, (e) Teacher self-efficacy beliefs in using technology for remote learning, (f) implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher's self-efficacy in teaching.*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study is the self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is the idea that individuals believe they can or cannot achieve specific outcomes

based on experience, verbal affirmations and external factors. Self-efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory, which is evident due to the impact that external and internal impacts have on an individual's self-efficacy belief (Skaalvik & Skaaalvik, 2017). The relationship between self-efficacy theory and social cognitive theory demonstrates how environmental factors and beliefs can simultaneously shape human behavior (Bandura, 1977). Humans can externally and internally impact behaviors by arranging environmental factors, setting goals, and evaluating purposes. Bandura (1977) believed that environmental factors, such as observational learning, social learning, and symbolic learning, played a more critical role in influencing behaviors than rewards and consequences (Bandura 1977). Positive assurances, mastery of experiences, and observations of others' successes are considered positive factors contributing to positive self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977).

Teacher self-efficacy was initially identified by Gibson and Dembo (1984) from previous studies on self-efficacy. Gibson and Dembo (1984) described teacher self-efficacy beliefs as the personal belief that a teacher can help students achieve academically. Like Bandura's (1977) theory on self-efficacy, positive teacher self-efficacy relies on the teacher's prior experiences and successes to develop. Woo et al. (2019) stated that teacher self-efficacy is associated with observing other teachers successfully completing a task and the willingness to ask for support when needed. Woo et al. (2019) also stated that teacher self-efficacy is a significant factor in improved teaching and learning environments.

The theory of teaching self-efficacy was utilized to identify the factors that impact educators during school closures. Bandura (1977) and Gibson and Dembo (1984) stated that experience, environment, and observation of success drives an educator's belief and confidence to help students achieve. This study considered these factors while investigating how educators' self-efficacy beliefs were impacted While teaching remotely during school pandemic closures.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

To further understand how teachers' self-efficacy in teaching remotely may have been impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was appropriate to know how an educator's efficacy in utilizing technology for teaching and learning is developed. Many theories aim to explain how an individual accepts technology; these competing theories vary based on user type, location, adoption times, and task (Altalhi, 2021). The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh (2003) is a concept that aims to understand how the attitudes and behaviors of individuals impact how they interact with new technologies. The theory itself is rooted in seminal works on social cognitive theory, the theory of planned behavior, and Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Theory Hub). Venkatesh (2003) merged eight leading models based on behavior and technology to develop the theory. The UTAUT model is regarded as one of the most effective models for predicting technology acceptance, as 70% of the variances in user intention may be conjectured (Mokhtar & Karim, 2021). While UTAUT was initially developed to understand the consumer's behaviors within the e-commerce business, several studies consider the UTAUT in an educational setting. These studies examined

how the behaviors and attitudes of teachers impacted their acceptance and utilization of learning programs and how they may have impacted their self-efficacy in teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The deviation from traditional methods of learning to online learning, while challenging, allowed for many new opportunities for the implementation of technology within the field of education. Such positive steps in these advancements include video conferencing for learning. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) established that free video conferencing programs were heavily used during the pandemic, making it possible to continue educational instruction (Qiao et al., 2021). To investigate the factors influencing education behaviors while using video conferencing programs, Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) employed the UTAUT, hypothesizing that factors such as performance expectancy, motivation, and habit impact the acceptance and use of video conferencing for teaching. While analyzing the progression of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, Qiao et al. (2021) also implemented the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology and the technology acceptance model. While investigating the evolution of technology implementation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that during school closures, educators used technology to deliver instruction effectively; after the pandemic, technologies were used as a means of efficiency (Qiao et al., 2021). Both studies stress that while video conferencing is not a new technology, programs such as Google Meet, Skype, and Zoom found their way to the forefront as necessary tools for teaching during the global pandemic (Qiao et al., 2021). Dindar et al. (2021) researched teachers' intentional behaviors and acceptance of technology for learning management

systems (LMS). While comparing two groups of teachers with opposing experiences utilizing LMS, Dindar et al. (2021) found little difference in self-efficacy in LMS use. However, the study revealed that teachers with more experience in LMS before the pandemic reported higher self-efficacy in instructional strategies and classroom management and indicated more technological support when compared to teachers with little experience.

Venkatesh's approach to human behavior and its relation to technology is holistic to understanding human interaction with technology. The adoption of numerous theories from various disciplines indicates that Venkatesh understands the complex nature by which technology is integrated into the lives of individuals. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory is one such facet that plays a crucial role in UTAUT, demonstrating how self-efficacy may impact the behaviors of an individual when utilizing technology. Using the UTAUT, the previous studies revealed a correlation between self-efficacy, prior experiences and the behaviors and intentional use of technology for remote teaching (Dindar et al. 2021, Nguyen, 2021).

Seminal Research in Teaching Self-efficacy

According to Corry and Stella (2018), the first research regarding teacher self-efficacy occurred in the RAND Studies during the 1970s. Rotter hypothesized a reciprocal relationship between efficacious behaviors and results within this study. Unlike Rotter, Bandura (1977) linked self-efficacy to the expected outcome. Hence, these two studies created varying measurement instruments, which may not specify these differences. Many recently developed tools for measuring teacher self-efficacy use

traditional models without considering the differences in theory between Ritter and Bandura's theories (Corry & Stella, 2018).

In addition to variances in instruments used to measure teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, Corry and Stella (2018) also provided insight into how modern measurements do not consider specified tasks a key proponent of validated results. They noted that in most studies, tools to measure teacher self-efficacy do not consider teaching delivery methods. Many instruments used to measure teachers' self-efficacy focus on face-to-face instruction (Corry & Stella, 2018). Corry and Stella (2018) also cited several researchers who link self-efficacy beliefs and technology and stated the importance of integrating technology and self-efficacy. Hence, adopting a modified measuring tool designed to assess teachers within online learning environments is necessary for accurately measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in online instruction. Corry and Stella (2019) stressed the importance of developing a teaching pedagogy incorporating technology integration. The researchers indicate the research and empirical validation limitations compared to face-to-face learning. Therefore, compared to face-to-face learning, limited data links the success rates of online education and teacher efficacy.

The data provided in Corry and Stella's (2018) research will guide my research in giving insight into the limitations of self-efficacy measuring tools. Some of the measuring instruments used to determine self-efficacy do not accurately measure how technology affects a teacher's self-efficacy belief in teaching. This is especially important due to the nature of this study. The proposed research focused on measuring teacher self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching during the pandemic. Therefore, the appropriate

tool for measuring self-efficacy beliefs must be a qualitative interview because there is not one technology that is crucial to the accuracy of results in the study(Cory & Stella, 2018).

Factors impacting teacher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching

Teaching self-efficacy is described as confidence in an educator's ability to teach. It may also relate to the environment of the classroom (Clark & Raker, 2021). The first studies involving Teaching Self-efficacy were developed in 1984 by Gibson and Dembo; this was the first study to successfully identify a correlation between a teacher's efficacy in teaching and teaching (Khanshaan & Yousefi, 2020). Smothers et al. (2020) developed casual comparative research dedicated to identifying the influences of teacher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching in online inclusive classrooms. Smothers et al., 2020) identify an increasing trend toward distance education in schools. Thus, universities change teacher preparation programs to include effective instructional practices for online education (Smothers et al., 2020).

While many studies indicate a need for higher-quality teacher preparation programs to combat unpreparedness among teachers, studies show an uptick in the opposite approach. In 2019-2020, the State of Washington waived many teacher requirements for certification due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Choate et al., 2021). Many other states, including Georgia, reduced clinical practice requirements and licensure exams (Hill, 2020 and GAPSC.com). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many teacher preparation programs needed curriculums that included pedagogy for distance learning, leaving thousands of new teachers unprepared to enter the classroom (Choate et

al., 2021). As Bandura, Smothers et al. (2020) revealed in their study, the need for further research on how teacher self-efficacy in remote/online learning is developed is vital. They suggest revisions to professional development, which highlight issues with self-efficacy, may prove beneficial in addressing the teaching self-efficacy of educators (Smothers et al., 2020).

There may still be mixed results in determining how teachers' self-efficacy impacts student achievement (Laureman et al., 2020). Chou and Chou (2021) stated discrepancies in work demands and job satisfaction among educators. In the case of distance learning during the Pandemic shutdowns, higher than standard work demands were met with low competency rates for using distance learning platforms, thus impacting teaching self-efficacy (Chou & Chou, 2021). Understanding these discrepancies is vital for improving instructional practices and job satisfaction, affecting student achievement Barni et al. (2019).

Teacher experiences and perceptions of remote teaching

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discrepancies is vital for improving instructional practices and job satisfaction, affecting student achievement Barni et al. (2019).

Teaching Self-Efficacy During the Time of Crisis

According to Yang (2020), interruptions within education due to the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in the shift in instructional methodologies. Therefore, further research in teaching self-efficacy is crucial to understanding the current needs of teachers and students. Pfleging and Cunningham (2021) examined educators' self-efficacy beliefs while considering teachers' personal well-being during the pandemic. Self-control and emotional intellect were essential in personal teaching self-efficacy beliefs (Pfleging & Cunningham, 2021).

Pfleging and Cunningham's (2021) research on teaching self-efficacy related to self-control and emotional intellect is critical for understanding the development of teacher-self-efficacy beliefs during a crisis. While school closures during the pandemic left educators unprepared for teaching online, Pfleging and Cunningham's (2021) research revealed that veteran teachers may have been more resilient as many expressed higher levels of self-control during the crisis. Crisis efficacy represents a teacher's ability to be flexible during difficult situations. It was found that educators with high crisis efficacy levels also had higher self-efficacy in teaching. Scocini et al. (2021) noted that school closures may have provided teachers with high levels of teaching self-efficacy and digital competency skills with a unique opportunity to focus on innovating the digital classroom. As a result, teachers with high levels of teaching self-efficacy may be more resilient in shifting to digital learning than other teachers.

Pfleging and Cunningham (2021) concluded that various factors might impact teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. However, a teacher's ability to cope and manage during a crisis may have played a critical role in how teachers effectively teach remotely during school closures. Fackler et al. (2019) indicated that teaching self-efficacy is a construct that is not cultivated, reiterating the idea that different factors impact its development. Fackler et al. (2019) suggested that much of the research about teacher self-efficacy fails to consider the broad-scale factors that may affect teacher self-efficacy beliefs, thus leading to generalized results. Therefore, to thoroughly examine teacher self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic, internal and external factors such as school environment, leadership, digital competency, knowledge of pedagogy, and personal self-efficacy beliefs must be considered.

Implications of Teacher Preparation During Pandemic School Closures

Limited planning and preparation and its impact on teaching are ongoing themes in many articles related to educators and the COVID-19 pandemic. Teacher preparation allows teachers to gain experiences of what they may confront while teaching in real-time, thus improving their confidence in effectively providing instruction online Haverback (2020). Recent studies on teacher self-efficacy and technology integration in the classroom provide evidence for the impact of professional development in technology integration in the school on the teacher self-efficacy views on implementing technology in the classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic was unplannable, and teachers needed more time to plan and prepare for the shift to online learning. Hardback (2020) states that teachers' self-efficacy may differ when asked to teach virtually with little preparation.

Ladendorf et al. (2021) found that while educators felt competent and successful teaching remotely, they were only sometimes satisfied with their experience. Ladendorf et al. (2021) revealed that, overall, factors in content knowledge played heavily on teachers' success levels and satisfaction while teaching remotely. Teachers with a more robust understanding of their content area were not satisfied with their students' progress. Teacher perceptions and attitudes toward technology use also influenced teaching self-efficacy in remote teaching. Cardullo et al. (2021) designed a study on the relationship between the extended technology acceptance model (TAM) and the teacher's self-efficacy in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The TAM model suggests that perceptions of technology relate to the initial introduction of technology Davis (Fauzi, 2021). Cardullo et al. (2021) revealed that teachers who perceive technology as valuable and user-friendly experienced positive cognitive responses while utilizing technology. Teachers' perceived usefulness of technology and remote teaching environment, functionality and internet speed, system quality and facilitating conditions, and school/district assistance with technology platforms were predictors of teacher self-efficacy beliefs in remote teaching factors (Cardullo et al., 2021). Professional development for technology use impacts teacher self-efficacy. Dolighan and Owen (2021) examined the impact teaching experience, professional development, and support had on teachers' self-efficacy perceptions. By investigating teacher self-efficacy correlations to technology integration in the classroom, Dolighan and Owen (2021) revealed that teachers who previously attended professional development sessions in technology integration for the school possessed high self-efficacy.

Administrative and facility support may have impacted teacher self-efficacy in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hardback (2020) suggested that the teaching self-efficacy of educators is affected by teaching experience, professional development, and support. Clear expectations for teaching and learning, content knowledge, technological assistance for online education, access to resources, and professional development were strained during school closures. Limited access to these constraints may have impacted teachers' self-efficacy within a rural school.

Professional Development in Response to School Closures

Professional development for curriculum and instruction is crucial for improving teachers' self-efficacy and beliefs in teaching (Bez-Hernandez, 2019). The pandemic limited professional development opportunities, especially in distance learning, emergency procedures, and technology instruction. These limitations indicate the need for educators to be more prepared for school shutdowns. Giallo and Little (2003) mentioned that preparedness means low self-efficacy.

Quality professional development of lesson plan writing, and curriculum alignment enhances teacher efficacy beliefs and instruction performance (Baez-Hernandez, 2019). Cavanaugh and Deweese (2019) suggested that investigating teacher resources and support found correlations between school closures and search engine data related to education and professional development. This basic qualitative study aimed to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Baez-Hernandez (2019) indicated that self-efficacy

views in instruction are related to quality professional development and valuable experiences. Research showed that internet searches for education and professional development-related sites increased by six times while searches for educational videos increased by 30, suggesting a decline of support within school systems due to school shutdowns (Cavanaugh & Deweese, 2020). While this research does not directly correlate self-efficacy views and the pandemic, it may support the notion of unpreparedness amongst school system administration and staff, as they were instructed to transition to virtual learning.

When teachers' belief in curriculum alignment improved, student performance also improved. Student learning may be impacted when teachers have limited access to curriculum planning and development, as their understanding and beliefs on curriculum alignment have yet to be developed (Baez-Hernandez, 2019). Baez-Hernandez (2019) suggested integrating meaningful professional development to improve teacher self-efficacy beliefs in various facets of teaching pedagogy.

School Preparedness for Pandemic Closures

Although technology-based education is becoming more prevalent in schools, educators need help implementing digital learning platforms. These issues prevent the coherent utilization of technology in the classroom (Ogodo et al., 2022). The global pandemic exposed many inadequacies with digital learning, such as training, resources, and inequitable distribution (Ogodo et al., 2020). Gerber (2020) revealed that in a sample of 41 school districts across the Nation, 85% of the districts indicated no plans for remote teaching during school closures. Hodges et al. (2020) suggested that the lack of

instructional preparation, infrastructure limitations, and digital access made the transition to digital learning strenuous for educators. Caglayan (2020) revealed that despite the many issues concerning preparation for school closures, lack of administrative support and expectations were the most frustrating aspects of school closures. Gross and Opalka (2020) identified that this issue was especially prevalent in low-income and rural schools, resulting in inconsistent and inequitable student learning opportunities. In summary, while schools become more dependent on technology-based learning, many concerns remain regarding its practical implications, including student access and equity to technology, administrative support, and teacher training and efficacy.

One critical example demonstrating how districts needed to prepare for transitions to digital learning was the need for digital competency among schoolteachers. School administrations had unrealistic expectations for teachers to provide effective and engaging learning content. However, teachers were given little to no training as they were expected to use programs they had never used before (Hodges et al., 2020). Gerber (2020) indicated that teachers were expected to design engaging lessons using digital platforms with minimal training. Various studies suggested that teachers worked overtime to meet all the demands and challenges. Teaching has become increasingly demanding as teachers continually seek different modalities of learning instruction to keep students effectively engaged while simultaneously keeping up with personal issues (Allen et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Pressley, 2021).

Hodges (2020) stated that mastery in a combination of technical, pedagogical, and interpersonal skills is attributed to a positive learning experience. While educators may possess the competency for some of these skills, many still need digital competency (Hodges et al., 2020). Sufficient training, resources, and instructional strategies are vital for implementing positive digital learning environments. Therefore, continual teacher training for virtual education is necessary (Ogodo et al., 2020). At the same time, digital competency is crucial for providing effective online teaching. Lane et al. (2019) revealed limitations in digital competency, stating that it needs to provide more guidance for designing well-planned digital instructional lessons. Therefore, besides training in digital competency skills identified by Hodges (2020), teachers may benefit from digital instructional design training, as Lane et al. (2020) indicated.

School Unpreparedness for Pandemic Closures

Although technology-based education is becoming more prevalent in schools, educators face many problems when implementing digital learning platforms. These issues prevented the coherent utilization of technology in the classroom (Ogodo et al., 2022). The global pandemic exposed many inadequacies with digital learning, such as training, resources, and inequitable distribution (Ogodo et al., 2020). Gerber's (2020) study revealed that in a sample of various school districts nationwide, 85% of the model indicated no plans for remote teaching during school closures. Hodges et al. (2020) suggested that the lack of instructional preparation, infrastructure limitations, and digital access made the transition to digital learning strenuous for educators. Caglayan (2020) revealed that despite the many issues concerning preparation for school closures, lack of

administrative support and expectations were the most frustrating aspects of school closures. Gross and Opalka (2020) identified that this issue was especially prevalent in low-income and rural schools, resulting in inconsistent and inequitable student learning opportunities.

One critical example demonstrating how districts were unprepared for transitions to digital learning is the need for digital competency among schoolteachers. School administrations had unrealistic expectations for teachers to provide effective and engaging learning content. Nevertheless, little to no training was provided to teachers as they were expected to use programs they had never used before (Hodges et al., 2020). Gerber (2020) indicated that teachers were expected to design engaging lessons using digital platforms with minimal training. Various studies suggest that teachers worked overtime to keep up with all the demands and challenges presented to them as they learned how to use new modalities in teaching, teach students digitally, and keep up with personal issues at the same time (Hodges et al., 2020; Pressley, T., 2021).

Hodges (2020) stated that mastery in a combination of technical, pedagogical, and interpersonal skills is attributed to a positive learning experience. While educators may possess the competency for some of these skills, many still need digital competency (Hodges et al., 2020). Sufficient training, resources, and instructional strategies are vital for implementing positive digital learning environments. Therefore, continual teacher training for virtual education is necessary (Ogodo et al., 2020). At the same time, digital competency is crucial for providing effective online teaching. Lane et al. (2019) revealed limitations in digital competency, stating that it does not provide ample guidance for

designing well-planned digital instructional lessons. Therefore, besides training in digital competency skills identified by Hodges (2020), teachers may benefit from digital instructional design training, as Lane et al. (2020) indicated.

Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs in Using Technology

Teacher self-efficacy in technology integration is an important topic to study as it is vital to understand how the personal beliefs of educators impact the effectiveness of technology utilization in the classroom (Kwon et al., 2019). Kwon et al. (2019) stated that while teachers may have participated in high-quality professional development courses and access to quality technology resources, personal beliefs may impact personal self-efficacy beliefs about technology. These beliefs may stem from various external factors such as the technology environment, technical support, access to resources, and ongoing professional development. Barton and Dexter (2019) suggested that three core assertions, persuasion, vicarious experiences, and mastery experiences, are necessary to develop teacher self-efficacy beliefs in technology.

While the use of technology in the classroom is increasingly prevalent, teacher preparation programs provide limited preparation for technology use for teaching; thus, more consistency in classroom technology integration exists (Cooper et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2019). While technology use in public schools has increased by 363% over the past seven years, the pedagogy of technology within education professional development has virtually remained unchanged (Hartman et al., 2019). This suggests that uninspiring use of technology in the classroom and distractions on technological platforms lead to unsatisfactory results with technology utilization (Kwon et al., 2019). Hartman et al.

(2019) stated that the perceptions and beliefs of the educator determine the integration of technology within classrooms. Educators' confidence in technology, professional development, and excitement are the main factors in integrating technology. Infrastructure and support within districts and schools are also prominent factors in teachers' decision to integrate technology into the classroom (Hartman et al., 2019). Teacher self-efficacy in technology is a critical indicator of incorporating technology in the classroom. New technologies may challenge a teacher's traditional culture and pedagogical beliefs, resulting in low self-efficacy (Kwon et al., 2019). Teachers significantly impact the successful implementation of technology integration within pedagogy and self-efficacy beliefs of technology use (Kwon et al., 2019).

Professional development designs that incorporate self-efficacy development characteristics may prove beneficial in building teacher self-efficacy beliefs in technology for teaching (Barton & Dexter, 2019). Therefore, meaningful opportunities for exposure to technology for instructional use before implementation within the classroom may be necessary for developing teacher self-efficacy (Cooper et al.,2020). Cooper et al. (2020) recommend that professional development focus on blended learning activities, as these activities are heavily utilized in K-12 schools and universities. Teachers may benefit from professional development in this topic to improve their ability to assist students, especially during limited support (Cooper et al., 2020). This is pertinent to studying teacher self-efficacy beliefs in remote teaching during the pandemic. Before shutdowns, little professional development may have impacted teacher self-efficacy beliefs in distance learning..

Teacher Acceptance of Technology and the Impact on Self-Efficacy

WeiBenfels et al. (2022) indicated that teacher self-efficacy was a vital indicator of teacher burnout and identified self-efficacy, attitudes toward e-learning, and mental as related variables. Teacher self-efficacy is a constraint of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. While it can be described as a teacher's belief in successfully performing the tasks required by a teacher, Wiebenfels et al. (2022) indicated that instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement are three categories that describe teacher self-efficacy. Weibenfels et al. (2022) argued that while teachers may possess high self-efficacy, they may not experience the same levels of efficacy in teaching practices (Weibenfels et al., 2022).

To understand how digital teacher learning during the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted teacher self-efficacy, one must understand two concepts: how teachers cope with stress and perceive technology for learning. WeiBenfels et al. (2022) noted that teachers possess higher post-traumatic stress levels than the general population after being exposed to grievous unfortunate events. This stems from the teacher's multiple concerns for their well-being, family, and students; these feelings overwhelm educators and may lead to low self-efficacy (Weibenfels et al., 2022). In addition to stress, teachers ' views on technology play a role in their self-efficacy. As indicated by the integrative model of prediction, utilization of technology is influenced by teacher views and technology use for learning (Weibenfels et al., 2022). During school shutdowns, teachers were expected to change teaching strategies and routines, with little to no experience ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic with little to no experience. WeiBenfels et al. (2022)

argued that these two variables played a significant role in teachers' mental health, thus impacting their teacher self-efficacy in utilizing technology for distance learning.

According to Albert Bandura(1977) self-efficacy theory, mastery experiences are a crucial indicator of budling self- efficacy. As teachers struggled to shift to new learning modalities while simultaneously teaching quickly, teachers may have been least likely to gain mastery experiences in digital teaching (Barry & Easterly (2021). In addition, limited opportunities for professional development were likely to decrease the chance for teachers to experience mastery of technology for distance learning. To understand this further, Dindar (2021) utilized the unified theory of acceptance and use of the technology model to determine how behaviors and attitudes towards new technologies play a role in the competency of digital teaching. Venkatesh developed the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology in 2003 to predict indicators of technology acceptance within an organization (Mariyakan et al., 2021). While the approach focuses mainly on technological innovation and the production of employees versus technological investment, The idea has roots in the social cognitive theory.

Repercussions for Learning Outcomes

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, academic access and learning gaps were hot-button issues in education. School closures have exacerbated this problem (Cottingham et al., 2020). According to Kuhfield et al. (2020), it was projected that students only retained 63-68% of their previous learning gains in reading and 37-50% retainment in math. Some researchers indicate these numbers as modest in some accounts (Azevedo et al., 2020). Ogodo et al. (2021) stated the negative opposing impact school unprepared

had on educators, students, and families, revealing that school closures impacted students from low socioeconomic communities the most. According to Ogodo et al. (2021), unstable income, inequities in technology resources, and prior academic gaps were to blame for the continual widening of the achievement gap.

The disparities in technological access in various socioeconomic backgrounds prevent a coherent implementation of digital learning platforms in school districts (Mao et al., 2019). Obiakor and Adeniran (2020) observed disparities in student digital access along socioeconomic lines. Schools sometimes resorted to giving students hard copies of instructional material, which families were asked to pick up and return (Anderson, 2020). While hard copies and packets allowed students to continue with academics, they did not provide a solution to help students keep in contact with teachers (Anderson, 2020). Anderson (2020) links this issue with Moore's (1993) theory on transactional distance, which states that the interacting characteristic of structure, dialogue, and learner autonomy impacts learning outcomes in a distance education situation. The lack of interaction between teachers and students who did not have access to digital learning may have impacted students' engagement, thus impacting academic achievement.

One of the fundamental principles of the self-efficacy theory is the belief that an individual can complete a task. In the case of teachers, it is the belief that a teacher can impact student learning (Bandura, 1977). Unfortunately, disparities in socioeconomics within some communities made it impossible for all students to have the same equitable access to digital education during school shutdowns (Parolin & Lee,

2021). While it is evident that these inequities played a significant role in learning latency, teacher acknowledgment of the equity disparities also impacted teacher self-efficacy, as teachers were unable to control student access to learning.

Implications

Completing a study about teacher self-efficacy in teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic may provide administrators an understanding of how their support played a role in the effectiveness of teachers while providing online instruction during the pandemic. Understanding if and how administrators impacted teacher effectiveness may help administrators and teachers work together to implement strategies to fit the needs of teachers better when they are asked to transition to various modalities of instruction quickly. This study relied on teachers' interview questions as data. This data is a collection of responses from teachers as they reflect on their experiences while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and how administrative support impacted their effectiveness in teaching. The data collected in this study reveals personal perspectives of teachers' experiences that administrators have not considered when making informed instruction decisions. This information may also shed light on additional training and resources teachers may need to improve efficacy in remote teaching. This workshop will assist teachers during times of crisis, as seen in the global pandemic, and provide teachers access to effective implementation of modern teaching modalities. As schools increasingly rely on technology for instruction, teacher training for new technology is necessary. One of the key proponents of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is for the individual to engage in and experience success in the task that one is learning (Bandura,

1994). This supports the idea of developing and implementing professional development workshops that allow teachers to learn and engage with resources and tools used successfully by other teachers in the school.

Summary

The literature review discussed the following topics: teacher acceptance of using technology, factors impacting teacher self-efficacy beliefs, teacher experiences while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, school preparedness during times of crisis, and professional development impact on self-efficacy in teaching technology. Teacher self-efficacy was used to research how teachers gain confidence in education. Teacher acceptance of using technology was examined to identify the behaviors and intentions of teachers as they utilize technology for remote instruction. School preparedness was also reviewed to understand how schools proceed with continual learning if the school is forced to close. The onset of the global pandemic impacted the modalities of instruction as schools were forced to close to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted the quality of instruction in schools, forcing educators to teach remotely while using learning management systems and other technologies with little or no experience. Although school and local board administrators made these decisions to continue teaching students with minimum impact, there needs to be more information about the effects the principals and administrative staff had on the teaching self-efficacy of teachers. Limited opportunities for professional development and administrative support in executing online instruction during the

pandemic may have impacted the confidence level of teachers' ability to teach remotely (Huang et al., 2022; VanLone et al., 2022). More studies must be conducted to fully understand how administrative support during the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted teachers' self-efficacy.

Section 2: Methodology

The methodology section is provided to give this study a contextual framework and provide details of the procedural nature of the study to avoid bias and ensure the study's replicability. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this project study, I explored how administrative support during school closures impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as they continued to teach students through remote learning initiatives. To illustrate a fuller scope of the issue of distance learning, it was imperative to investigate the dynamics of administrative support for teachers, teacher self-efficacy, and the factors that impact self-efficacy in teachers. Positive teaching self-efficacy is vital as it indicates student achievement (Poulou et al., 2019). The following section provides the research method for this study; this includes the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, and ethical considerations. In addition, the methodology includes a discussion of the research findings and the goal of the study.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from this study was gathered using semi-structured interviews with middle school teachers who provided instruction during the school closure due to the pandemic. Open-

ended interview questions were asked to allow the interviewees to share their experiences and perspectives as they reflect on their time teaching remotely during the pandemic.

The central theme of the study was the development of teacher self-efficacy beliefs in remote teaching during the pandemic, and the role administrative support had in developing these beliefs. The research questions that guide the research are:

RQ1: What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What are middle school teachers' perceptions about how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

An interview protocol was utilized to guide the interview process. This document, located in Appendix B, assisted in maintaining focus as I interviewed the teachers. The interview protocol used in this study was field-tested by three Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to ensure the validity of each question. Each subject matter expert was selected based on their experience in education in the field of curriculum and technology; each SME has the following credentials: have over ten years of experience as an educator, has completed scholarly research in the field of education, and currently working in a supervisory role within a school or district. A copy of the research protocol and a brief description of the research project were sent to each subject matter expert for their review and suggestions. A copy of my request email and the correspondence of each SME can be found in Appendix C. Each SME provided feedback on the proposed instrument to ensure the validity and accuracy of each interview question. Each SME's suggestions included reordering questions for clarity, adding questions regarding accountability measures, and

information on how districts supported families with no technology. These suggestions were added to the interview protocol and alignment. The final draft of the interview protocol is in Appendix B.

Research Design

Design approaches are chosen based on the goals and purpose of the research. The purpose of this research was to explore the self-efficacy of teachers; therefore, the research focused on data related to teacher experiences and descriptions. Qualitative research relies on descriptive data to help uncover specific trends in the behaviors of individuals within a real-life setting (Eyisi, 2016). A qualitative basic design approach was be used for this study. Qualitative research is deeply rooted in social science, as it has been used in anthropology and sociology (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Three types of methodology approaches may be considered when designing a research project: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The research design, data collection, and data analysis approach for each methodology provides the researcher with different purposes for the study. Therefore, carefully considering the methodology approach for a research project is a crucial step in identifying the purpose and outcomes of the project. Quantitative research relies heavily on quantifiable data using scales and other statistical data sets; the analysis of this data is used to either accept or reject a hypothesis created around the theme or problem of the research (Askarzai & Unhelkar, 2017). Qualitative research seeks to understand participants' experiences and interpret how their experiences shaped their views and opinions on the topic through interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups (Cresswell, 2018). The researcher uses descriptive data, coding, and

identifying themes to understand the problem. Quantitative focuses on testing an issue, while qualitative research focuses on why or how something occurs. However, combining these two approaches may be used concurrently in mixed methods research to learn the full scope of a complex problem through descriptive analysis and statistical data (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

While quantitative data and mixed methods designs would identified self-efficacy beliefs through scales, it would have limited the ability to understand the full scope of the issue. Many factors impact self-efficacy, and it was vital for the researcher to understand which factors impacted teachers the most as they taught remotely during the pandemic. At the same time, a mixed methods approach would have included qualitative data within the study, along with the quantitative method. However, this study aimed to only look solely at self-efficacy factors through teachers' words.

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the researcher is the primary tool in data collection, while data refers to details observed and collected by the researcher. Qualitative research provides an understanding of phenomena that various complex systems may impact. Over time, scholars have utilized and perfected the data collection process for qualitative studies to maintain veracity within a study (Burkholder et al., 2020). Dezin and Lincoln (2011) described qualitative data as a situated activity that places the observer within the setting where the phenomena occur. Research problems are initiated through a theoretical framework and assumptions to attribute to the practical problem (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

While examining the problem identified for this study, a gap in the literature on teacher self-efficacy beliefs in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and administrative support was discovered. Merriam and Grenier (2019) stated that placing participants in the center of the study allows the researcher to consider their experiences as critical indicators of how and why a phenomenon is occurring. To further examine the complex factors that may have impacted the problem, a qualitative study would be the appropriate approach to explore the issue further (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). This study sought to understand participants' experiences while teaching remotely and interpret how their experiences shaped their efficacy in teaching online (Creswell, 2018). However, Burkholder et al. (2020) state that participants' experiences alone cannot justify a conceptual framework. Adding a theoretical framework and professional literature is necessary to provide a rationale. This project focused solely on exploring the phenomena of teacher self-efficacy and online learning; therefore, based on the purpose of the research, qualitative research was the most appropriate.

Participants

Selecting participants for qualitative research is a purposeful process in which participants are chosen if it is believed that they can contribute quality insight to the study (Sergeant, 2012). According to Saldaña and Omasta (2018), searching for the most qualified candidates for qualitative research is vital to sampling. Patton (2002) indicates that purposeful sampling effectively provides analysis with rich data. This study included eleven middle school teachers in grades 6-8 who worked at the study site between 2019-

2021. Participants were interviewed about their experience teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Participant screening through inclusion and exclusion criteria is critical to the recruitment process. Patino and Ferreira (2018) stated that inclusion criteria are attributes of a participant, which makes them prime candidates for the research, while exclusion criteria weed out participants who are not. This study's inclusion characteristics included consent to participate and work at the site location as a full-time certified middle school teacher teaching a core academic course. Teachers must have been teaching at the local middle school during academic school years impacted by pandemic shutdowns 2019-2020 and/or 2020-2021 and were teaching remotely during the shutdown. Exclusion criteria included refusal to sign a consent form for participation, not being a full-time certified academic middle school teacher under contract for at least one of the years pandemic closures impacted the school, not teaching remotely during pandemic closures, and the inability to participate in the interview process. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are essential in accessing quality data to achieve saturation (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

When determining the number of participants to include in the project study, one must consider the concept of saturation. Saturation is a concept in which the researcher believes no further data is needed (Saunders et al., 2018). While coding interview data, saturation may be achieved when no new concepts or codes are present during data analysis (Urguahart, 2013). According to Guest's (2006) research on data saturation for qualitative, it was found that 92% of the data sets within the study met data saturation within 12 interviews. Furthermore, it was recommended that 10-12 participants be chosen

for interviews lasting one hour each. To avoid bias or other discrepancies regarding participants, I have interviewed teachers I do not currently work with, nor have I ever served as a supervisor. In this study, the proposed location had thirty-five teachers. The anticipated number of participants to meet saturation was 10, a 28.5% participation rate. This is considered a moderately high participation rate. If at least 10 participants were not recruited, a new recruitment plan would be developed, including recruiting teachers from other local middle schools. In this case, I would gain permission from the IRB to recruit additional middle schools from other middle schools within our region. To ensure saturation was achieved, recruitment continued during the interview process were conducted. After a month of not meeting saturation, a paper flyer was sent out to the school; this flyer was similar to the initial email; however, a link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire will be provided to assist with participant eligibility. Interested teachers emailed and emailed me directly for more information. Interviews continue until saturation has been met. I was able to recruit 11 participants, a participation rate of 32.4%

Once the interviewees were selected to participate in the research, they were notified by email to set up a convenient interview time (Appendix E). Participants could email me if they had any questions or concerns about the interview. Interviews were conducted using Zoom and recorded for review.

Data Collection

This section explains how I planned to gain access to participants, recruit, and conduct interviews. Once I gained approval to start my research with the IRB, I will send a consent form to the district superintendent. Upon IRB district and admin approval and

app, I emailed my organization's point of contact (Appendix D) and requested that they email my recruitment flyer (Appendix D) on my behalf. This flyer included information about the purpose of the study, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, details about anonymity, and possible risks associated with the study. Teachers who were interested in participating signed the confidentiality agreement using Survey Monkey. This survey was a confidential sign-up (Appendix E) asking for their name, contact information, a criteria screening checklist, and a confidentiality disclosure. As teachers completed the survey, I received email notifications about their interest in participating in the study. I screened each entry based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria or any other red flag issues. After all, criteria were met, I contacted the potential interviewee, confirmed their data on file, answered any questions the teachers had, scheduled a time for the interview (Appendix F), and sent them a consent to participate form, which must be signed and dated prior to the interview (Appendix G). All the information provided by the teachers remained confidential and moved to a secure file on my external hard drive. During this initial contact, I stressed to the participants the sensitive nature of the study and the importance of participant confidentiality before, during, and after the interview.

Semistructured interviews using Zoom were used to gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of teachers as they navigated their way through remote teaching during pandemic school closures. The process of elicitation was used in interviews. *Elicitation* is a technique in which verbal and non-verbal cues are implemented to engage the participant during the interview process (2015). According to Barton (2015), elicitation reduces participants' anxiety by giving them a sense of control

during the interview, thus allowing participants to feel comfortable providing detailed information about their experiences. Each interview lasted up to an hour on Zoom. The ten questions in the interview protocol helped drive the interview; however, follow-up questions were provided for more clarification or more profound context. During the initial scheduling of the interviews, I provided each participant with a Zoom video conferencing link and code for their specific date and time.

Participants logged in using their computers. Videoconferencing is a viable choice for interviewing because it can reach individuals if location and time constraints make it challenging to meet face-to-face (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). While virtual meetings provide researchers and participants with a convenient way to interact, special precautions must be made to maintain the confidentiality of the content of the interview and the interviewee. I followed The following detailed plan to keep each Zoom meeting confidential. Various precautions were taken to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of each interview completed on Zoom. My Zoom account was created using university credentials. To avoid interruptions during the meeting, participants received a private meeting code requiring a passcode for each meeting, and the virtual meeting room was locked during the interview. Participants were asked to schedule a time when they knew they would have at least one hour of independent, uninterrupted time to interview. If individual interviews must be scheduled back-to-back, meeting rooms will be locked, and participants will not have access to other meetings. However, this was unnecessary as meetings were never scheduled on the same day. Screen or file sharing was disabled during the meetings. At the start of the meetings, participants were told verbally when the

recording would begin; I read the consent form that the participants signed and received verbal consent prior to the start of the video and reminded participants about the confidential nature of the interview. I also read a statement reminding participants that they are not authorized to record any part of the interview for any reason (Appendix G); all settings for participant recording were turned off during the interview. I used the interview protocol to ask each question and provide follow-up questions to clarify any statements. At the end of each video, I thanked the interviewee for their participation and let them know when I was no longer recording. Each Zoom interview video was saved as a .mp4 file on my external hard drive and locked in a file at my home. A reflective journal documented my personal experience and thoughts during the interviews. Reflective journaling is an active process of notating the researcher's internal ideas throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This journal was kept in a locked file as well.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this project study, I collect, analyze, and expound on the data. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), a researcher plays a crucial role in collecting and analyzing data and must maintain ethical standards throughout the project. From investigating the theoretical framework to support the problem statement to aligning interview questions to reflect the purpose, each step is methodically taken to ensure the integrity of the study.

I am a middle school teacher working at a public school in Georgia. I have taught for 16 years in public and charter school settings. I have taught various subjects, from math to science and art. The role of the teacher is to provide instruction and develop effective lesson plans based on state standards using research-based instructional strategies. However, during COVID-19 school closures, the role of a classroom teacher shifted from classroom instructor to online facilitator; this limited teachers' ability to directly instruct students by taking away the face-to-face interaction between teachers and students. While my experience as a teacher during the pandemic allowed me to experience what it was like to teach, I must be careful not to instill my biases and emotions in the study. Biases may occur when interviewing other teachers about self-efficacy in remote teaching. During interviews, it is vital to remain neutral when investigating other teachers' experiences and allow their experiences to drive the study's narrative. My relationship with the research site should not impact the data, as I currently do not teach at the location of the study. I only have a former professional relationship with school members, and I have never been in a circumstance where I held a supervisory position over a school member.

Instrumentation

Unlike quantitative research, which has a standardized instrument for data collection, qualitative researchers focus on generating a device that produces results that display the reality of the phenomena (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Semistructured interviews using elicitation techniques were used to understand the research question further. The qualitative approach to a project study aims to consider the complex

conditions and experiences that shape a problem and is a viable approach to gaining insight into the affairs of the study participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Three SMEs developed and field-tested an interview protocol to help guide me with the interviewing process (Appendix B). A formal letter was sent to the SME requesting their assistance in checking the interview questions' validity (Appendix C). These three educators are considered SMEs because they each possess at least ten years of experience in education technology and curriculum, have experience providing professional development for technology for teachers, and have experience with conducting teacher formative assessments. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews act as a guide to optimized engagement during the interview. The questions are aimed to reveal the teacher's experiences and perceptions while teaching remotely during the school closures, as well as their current perceptions of using remote teaching after their experience. The interview took place using Zoom, which was recorded for later viewing. Field notes and recorded interviews were taken during the interviews (Creswell, 2013). Precautions were taken to ensure that each interview was confidential. This included ensuring that the participant and I were in a secure place for interviews, such as a locked classroom or office, and were alone during the meeting. Only one participant was allowed in the meeting at one time. I turned off screen recording during the session and any other video conferences that could compromise the interview's confidentiality and finally ensured a statement on privacy and the duties and rights of the participants were included on the participant's signed consent form.

Precise observations of the participant's perceptions and gestures were included in the notes to identify the individual's verbal and non-verbal cues when reacting to interview questions. After the interviews, the data collected were transcribed using Turboscribe and coded for themes related to the research question using NVIVO 14. Follow-up correspondence was made for any clarification needed during the transcribing and coding. The member-checking process is crucial in ensuring validity in interpretation (Burkholder et al., 2020). Table 1 shows how each interview question aligns with the research question.

Table 1:

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions and Bandura's self-efficacy theory and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Venkatesh (2003).

1.	Describe how technology was used in your classroom before the pandemic? How effective do you think you work in utilizing this technology? Give examples.	RQ1 teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching	"Acceptance of technology use" Venkatesh (2003)
2.	How effective did you believe your teaching with technology was during the pandemic? Give examples.		"Impacts of teacher technology use" (Hartman et. al 2019)
3.	What challenges have you faced when using technology during remote learning?		Challenges impacting remote learning (Hodges et. al 2020)
4.	Describe how you implemented technology in the classroom during the pandemic. Do you think these implementations were effective in		Impacts of teacher technology use" (Hartman et. al 2019)

	helping your students? What did you like/dislike?		
5.	How has the experience of teaching remotely during the pandemic impacted you as a teacher? Did you believe you were effective? How has your effectiveness of a teacher changes since this experience?		Experiences impact self-efficacy") Weibenfels et al., 2022)
6.	Describe the expectations your administrators had for you as a teacher using remote teaching…How were these expectations communicated? How did this communication impact your self-efficacy?	RQ2 Teacher perceptions of administrative support impact on teacher self-efficacy.	"Administrative supports expectations for the role of teaching while teaching remotely" (Hodges et al., 2020).
7.	What resources and tools did your administrators provide to assist you with remote learning? Did these tools and report your teaching self-efficacy positively or negatively?		"Effective professional development to support self-efficacy in technology implementation" (Cooper et al., 2020).
8.	Explain how your administrators assisted you when facing challenges while teaching remotely? Do you believe this assistance impacted your effectiveness in teaching? Why or Why not?		Administrative supports expectations for the role of teaching while teaching remotely" (Hodges et al., 2020).
9.	Overall, how supported do you feel your administrative team was		"Administrative supports impact on

	in your implementation of remote learning?	teacher confidence" (Haverback, 2020)
10.	How did this support impact your perceived effectiveness in teaching remotely?	

Data Analysis

After each interview, I reviewed each transcription generated by Zoom. Doing this after each consultation allowed me to keep track of repetitive experiences and new ideas. Zoom interviews continued until further information had yet to be collected and saturation had been met. Once the collection was completed, I reviewed and transcribed each interview using the program Turboscribe. According to Ravitch and Carl, using real-time data recording for transcriptions provides more accuracy than taking notes.

Analyzing raw data from interviews allows the researcher to gain insight into central themes that participants may share. This in-depth analysis provides rich detail about the topic and reveals answers to research questions (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the initial analysis process begins with transcribing and summarizing the interview. Transcriptions allow for the ability to find keywords and themes much faster than reviewing a video. Non-verbal cues could also be notated, as these actions may influence verbal interpretation. Each file was saved several times on an external hard drive and placed in a locked file to ensure security.

The Process of Coding

Coding is a qualitative data analysis process in which short verbal language is collected and analyzed in search of patterns in the data (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). These

patterns are then used to help provide context to a researched problem. Open coding is a method that allows the researcher to identify themes found in the interviews and allows the researcher to categorize and compare data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The open coding process was used to look for and categorize themes found in the data. These themes would play an integral part in answering the research question. The process of coding started by identifying repetitive ideas, themes, or ideas mentioned in each interview. While reviewing each interview, words, phrases, or cues that showed up and were similar were identified and coded. Codes that were repetitive in nature or language that related to the research question were highlighted. Then, these codes were departmentalized based on similar subjects, emotions/sentiments, and experiences. Each code was reorganized, grouped, and identified as a theme (Grbich, 2013).

Further analysis of these groups allows the researcher to identify themes, problems, and paradoxes that exist in the phenomena (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Saldana and Omasta (2016) recommend a two-step approach to coding in which the initial process focuses on searching for repetitive codes and language within the transcribed interviews. Once established, one can move on to secondary coding, which uses the initial codes to analyze and develop themes (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). In sum, coding may help identify similar characteristics educators share as it relates to self-efficacy while teaching remotely, similar themes of administrative support, and similar characteristics in communication themes between school stakeholders. Words, short phrases, and possible non-verbal cues that provide clues on the participants' perspectives and experiences while teaching remotely during the pandemic were identified. The goal was to focus on how

participants reacted to questions regarding technology, challenges while teaching, and administrative support, as this may provide insight into how teacher self-efficacy in remote teaching was impacted. NVIVO 14 was while coding.

First Cycle Coding

A Clean transcript was uploaded to Nvivo14 and coded to identify data related to the research study's objective and the research questions. The transcripts were reviewed in search of data about each research question. This data was highlighted based on information in RQ1. What are the middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and RQ2? How did school administrators impact these self-efficacy beliefs? Concepts associated with teacher-oriented experiences and administrative-oriented ones were deciphered. This helped aggregate the information between the two research questions. Once this process was completed, the transcripts were reviewed for related language. Codes were created to suggest related ideas and concepts within each transcript, and each theme was assigned a highlighter color. During each text review, codes were highlighted and categorized in NVIVO 14. During the first cycle of coding, 24 codes were developed.

Second Cycle Coding

As codes were identified from each interview, connections within the data were revealed. The goal of the second cycle of the coding process was to decipher the data into smaller categories that linked the interviewees' responses. The process of identifying relationships within identified codes to reveal a central theme between them is called axial coding (Saldaña, 2021). During this process, six themes emerged through the

coding process of interview transcripts. A matrix was developed to help organize the data into seven subthemes. The themes identified for Research Question 1 (RQ1) dealt with inadequacies in technology infrastructures and the socioeconomic disparities that impacted the effective teaching of all students.

The themes identified for Research Question 2 (RQ 2) focus on the perceptions of administrative support regarding impacting teaching efficacy while teaching remotely during the pandemic. Four themes emerged from the data: communication, expectations, perceptions of mutual trust between admin and teachers, and administrative support. Data for each of them were developed as teachers reflected on their experiences while interacting with members of the Administration. This includes recollections of meetings, emails, videoconferencing, and other interactions in which teachers relied on the Administration to assist in problem-solving.

Themes

This study aimed to answer two research questions: research Question 1 (RQ1) What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic? Research Question 2 (RQ2) What are middle school teachers' perceptions about how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Themes for Research Question 1

The first three themes identified in the study answered research question one. Teachers' perceptions of technology for teaching before the pandemic impacted how they utilized technology while teaching remotely. The teacher's response indicated that

individuals who felt comfortable with technology and utilizing it frequently in the classroom felt more comfortable teaching remotely. The perception of student apathy and involvement reduced teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy, as they believed that students were not learning while away from school. During the interviews, teachers conveyed challenges while teaching remotely during the pandemic as they pertained to student motivation and engagement, as they saw a reduction in participation and engagement in online classrooms and lessons. However, student accessibility and equity to technology and the internet impacted teachers' perception of effectiveness the most, as it was believed these issues impacted their most vulnerable students.

The following is an analysis of teacher experiences and how these experiences impacted their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme 1: Teacher Relationship with Technology

Relationship with technology was the first theme uncovered from the data. This theme is separated into three sub-categories, which investigate how teachers perceived their ability to use technology effectively, implemented it before school closures, and utilized it while teaching remotely during the pandemic. The data revealed teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about using technology in the classroom daily and how this belief shaped their decisions to use technology during the pandemic (RQ 1). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all surveyed teachers used classroom technology, with 9 out of 11 teachers indicating confidence in its integration. In contrast, 5 out of 11 teachers preferred pencil and paper compared to 6 of the 11 teachers who primarily used Google Suite for instruction. However, 7 out of 11 teachers expressed negative experiences due to issues

with specific resources. Participant 2 highlighted this shift in confidence, stating, "They felt very tech-savvy before the pandemic." This contrast between pre-pandemic confidence and pandemic challenges highlights the need for additional support and resources to improve teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching.

During the interviews, participants discussed how technology was utilized within the classroom before and during the pandemic. All teachers mentioned that they used technology in some capacity in the classroom, with varying levels of success. Some teachers vocalized higher comfort levels than others, which translated to the types of classroom activities and programs they implemented. Participant 2 explained that pencil and paper were used most of the time, and technology was used to prepare them for taking state assessments. Participant 12 shared the same sentiment about technology and stated, "I am a paper-pencil teacher. They may have used Chromebooks to research in science class or social studies, but for the most part, pencil and paper."

All teachers explained that technology became a challenge during the pandemic, as varying factors impacted teachers' and students' ability to use technology effectively, thus impacting a smooth transition to remote learning. Teachers who were limited in their technology use in the classroom found that teaching remotely was limiting in what they could teach remotely. Teachers who used technology daily before the pandemic found few limitations in technology but did cite those inadequacies in internet access and student technology, which became a significant hurdle during this time. Four teachers mentioned the use of Google Classroom prior to the pandemic, a program that was used

heavily during closures. Uses for technology prior to closures included assessments, remediation, practice, rewards, and communication. Participant 10 indicated that before the pandemic, Google Classroom was often a supplementary resource in the classroom. Nine of the eleven teachers mentioned using a videoconferencing program to engage students. Participant 6 mentioned using Google Meets before the pandemic to provide one-on-one help. Most teachers mentioned programs such as Screencast, Flipgrid, Zoom, and Google Meet to engage students during the pandemic. One teacher specifically mentioned using a doc-cam to assist with guided learning. Several teachers mentioned a format in which they would record a lesson and post it in the Google Classroom, provide a paper and pencil lesson for students to complete, and offer a Zoom or Google Meets session to answer questions for students. Participant 3 shared that they used YouTube to assist with lessons. Another remedial math instructor noted that the programs they used in the classroom were unavailable and that they had to rely solely on videoconferencing to conduct lessons.

Theme 2: Lack of Student Involvement

Teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching during the pandemic was notably affected by student behaviors, as revealed by data. For instance, 2 out of 11 respondents cited student apathy as their primary challenge, underscoring the difficulty of sustaining student interest and involvement remotely. Moreover, 7 out of 11 indicated that student engagement had a detrimental impact on their teaching efficacy, highlighting how students' lack of motivation and interest affected teachers' perception of their effectiveness. Similar results were found in student participation. These findings

emphasize the significant role of student behavior in shaping teachers' confidence and perceived success in remote teaching environments. Teachers revealed that the lack of student involvement impacted their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely. Teachers expressed that as remote learning went on, students showed a decrease in engagement and participation in lessons, a reluctance to complete and turn in assignments, and a need for demonstration of understanding. As time passed by during distance learning, teachers noted that fewer students were participating in Zoom meetings and turning in work. Students logging into Zoom meetings were doing so less for academics and more for social purposes. Participant 5 noted that students who participated in the Zoom meetings wanted "some social time" and "just needed some contact with somebody ."Participant 4 stated that students were making excuses for not doing the work. Students "tried to use the I cannot do it, or I do not know how to access it kind of excuse." However, this could not be proven. Some teachers expressed their efforts to provide engaging activities, yet the need for more personalization and direct communication with their students disconnected students from the involvement seen in class.

Participant 12 explained that online teaching brought students and teachers together by allowing students to directly engage with teachers and share their household lives with the teacher. Participant 1 supported this idea and said, "It felt more personal than an in-person setting would be, but there were fewer distractions." However, this did not correlate with more or less academic engagement. Several teachers showed concerns for student understanding, stating, "It was very little about asking questions about what the work that they were needing to do" (Participant 5). Participant 8 indicated that as they

turned in assignments, they thought, "Okay, yeah, you answered the question, but did you understand it?" as it was challenging to indicate understanding. Several teachers revealed that behaviors did not improve as there was no recourse for student behavior; Participant 1 "felt like they (behaviors) were kind of swept under the rug and not dealt with." Participant 4 noted that behaviors "impacted my ability to use technology effectively.

Most interviewees indicated that students needed more interest and decreased participation in online classes and coursework over time. Teachers expressed their concerns about students' ability and reluctance to demonstrate understanding. This is attributed to teachers' self-efficacy and beliefs in teaching remotely, as teachers are not provided with positive experiences and feedback.

Theme 3: Student Accessibility to Technology

Student accessibility to technology was the third identifiable theme. Teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching during the pandemic was universally affected by student accessibility and connectivity issues, with 10 out of 11 participants identifying connectivity as the most critical factor for teaching effectiveness. Participants also mentioned accessibility and issues with devices as other key factors impacting their efficacy, with 5 out of 11 teachers directly referencing issues with devices and 9 out of 11 referring to accessibility to the internet. This concern highlights the significant challenges in ensuring students have reliable internet access and the necessary technology for remote learning. The pervasive focus on these issues underscores their essential impact on teachers' ability to provide effective instruction. Addressing accessibility and

connectivity is crucial for enhancing teachers' confidence and effectiveness in remote teaching environments.

Educators explained that many students needed internet access or viable technology to continue online learning. Participants mentioned how socioeconomic factors played a crucial role in accessibility, citing that lower-income students were disproportionately impacted by remote learning, as they lacked the resources to continue education at home. Participant 2 discussed the school's possible initiative to provide technology and internet to needy students. However, this program was never launched. However, the administration initiated an assignment pick-up/drop-off system for any family with limited internet and technology access. "Eventually, we just went to packets and paper pencils and gave every student a packet to avoid the excuse that I could not get the internet" (Participant 12). This helped the issue, but the solution of student and teacher communication was needed if students had questions while completing the packet.

This issue worsened for rural students and teachers as many households lacked access to reliable internet and cellphone services. The district encouraged students and teachers to go to public spaces such as libraries for internet use. However, there were more reliable methods for students to learn online. Teachers also explained that household factors also affected how often students could work using technology. Participants mentioned that some of their students babysit their siblings, making it difficult for their students to complete work and participate in online learning (Participant 7). Many teachers acknowledged that the inequity in technology and infrastructure

wedged the gap in learning disparities, as students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, who were already doing well in class, could continue their education.

There was a pervasive sense of inequity and frustration among educators, who felt the situation was beyond their control. The inability to reach and engage students emotionally strained some of the interviewed teachers. Participant 11 expressed feeling like they were failing their students; "I felt kind of like I was failing them in a way, you know, but that was not my fault.". Based on the interviews, it was evident from many of them that there was a clear concern for the impact the disparities mentioned would have on students. Teachers expressed frustration about the situation, citing a feeling of helplessness in their ability to teach their students adequately.

In summary, theme two revealed teachers' experiences that challenged their ability to teach remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers discussed how student engagement and apathy impacted remote teaching. Teachers witness a lack of motivation through the decrease in participation in class meetings, excuses for not having access to technology (which were not forthcoming), and a demonstration of lack of understanding based on work that was completed. Teaching also noted that accessibility was a significant hurdle when teaching remotely, and technological inequity among students increased learning gaps, leaving teachers helpless in their efforts to continue to teach.

Themes for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 (RQ2) What are middle school teachers' perceptions about how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19

pandemic? It aims to identify teachers' perceptions of administrative support while teaching remotely. During the interview, teachers were asked to reflect on their experience during the COVID-19 school closure and how the local school administrative team assisted with transitioning from face-to-face teaching to remote teaching. While coding the transcriptions, four themes emerged from the data, including communication, expectations, perceptions of mutual trust, and provided support. The following is an in-depth look into these themes as they pertain to the research question.

The themes identified for Research Question 2 (RQ 2) answer questions about perceptions of administrative support impacting teaching efficacy while teaching remotely during the pandemic. Four themes emerged from the data. First, administrative communication kept teachers aware of what was happening at the school and district levels, as information about the pandemic's impact on the district was rapidly changing. Teachers believed that clear expectations from the administrative staff provided them with guidelines on how to do their jobs and reinforced their expectations for their students. Teachers indicated that their perceptions of administrator efficacy revealed teachers lacked trust in the administration while teaching remotely. However, Administrative support through access to professional development and resources is a positive factor in increasing teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching.

Theme 4: Administrative Communication

Administrative communication during the COVID-19 pandemic involved the methods, frequency, and teachers' perceptions of such communication and its impact on their teaching self-efficacy while teaching remotely. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 10

out of 11 teachers communicated with the administration, mainly through email. However, perceptions of these interactions varied widely among participants, as 4 of 11 teachers reported negative experiences with administrative communication, with similar findings for positive perceptions. At the same time, 3 out of 11 participants felt neutral. Positive experiences were notably minimal, with only 1 participant indicating satisfaction. This data underscores that while communication channels were established, the effectiveness and quality of interactions were often perceived negatively or neutrally by teachers. Interviews revealed communication between the Administration and teachers, though experiences varied. Some teachers felt uncertain and confused due to unclear communication, which failed to address their specific needs or show sympathy for their challenges. For instance, participant 4 described the communication as "very intense" and lacking sympathy. Similarly, participant 8, a first-year teacher, reflected on the absence of supportive communication from administrators, noting, "There was no reaching out... There was no point of contact."

However, not all participants shared this view. Despite their uncertainty, participant 3 reported that administrators held meetings and provided necessary information. They mentioned that "both administrators were always available to email or text" and that administrators facilitated veteran teachers sharing strategies with newer teachers, leading to an overall positive perspective. Most communication occurred through Zoom calls and emails, often cascading from instructional coaches to each grade level. Nevertheless, this approach appeared inconsistent across the school, as indicated by the varied responses from participants.

Research question 2 asked what middle school teachers' perceptions of administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication between the Administration and teachers can be described as a form of support. As indicated by the interviews, there needed to be more communication from the admin. Bandura (1997) indicates that self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by an individual's ability to perform tasks. This theory suggests that effective communication can reinforce teachers' confidence in handling challenges, such as teaching remotely during the pandemic.

Theme 5: Administrative Expectations

Administrative expectations are described as the guidelines and directives set by school administrators, which outline the roles and responsibilities expected from teachers while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. These expectations include work hours, frequency of online classes, lesson plans, and methods of teacher-to-student communication.

Participants' perceptions of administrative expectations during remote teaching were influenced by clarity and communication. According to the study, a vast majority, 10 out of 11, stated they received directives or expectations from administrative staff. Additionally, 9% of participants reported not receiving any expectations from the administration, revealing a communication gap for a small portion of the group. Among those who received directives, 50% had positive feelings about the guidance provided, appreciating their clarity and support. However, 40% expressed negative feelings, indicating dissatisfaction or challenges with the directives. Meanwhile, "10% felt

neutral," neither strongly positive nor negative about the expectations they received. These findings highlight mixed responses among teachers regarding administrative guidance during remote teaching, despite the majority receiving clear expectations.

Participants reported inconsistent expectations and communication methods from administration, with some experiencing very rigid guidelines while others did not. Communication primarily occurred through email and grade-level meetings. Teachers were expected to create daily assignments in Google Classroom, conduct bi-weekly videoconferencing meetings with students, and be available during regular school hours. Although these expectations were seen as low for students, there needed to be a clear plan for holding students accountable for assignments. Teachers were encouraged to be lenient with students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and special education students, even if they did not participate in Zoom meetings or complete their work.

Administration emphasized the importance of teachers being available during work hours and set guidelines for social media use. While some teachers found these expectations reasonable given the circumstances, many felt frustrated, feeling that their hard work, often requiring a significant learning curve, was not matched with student accountability. To ensure teacher compliance, administrators occasionally joined Zoom meetings unannounced. Participant 12 mentioned that administrators sometimes participated in these meetings, questioning and interacting with students. Despite teachers' efforts to provide lessons, the absence of student accountability led to feelings of helplessness. Participant 5 felt that the expectations seemed like "pomp and circumstances" to maintain appearances in the community. Participant 11 expressed

confusion due to constantly changing information, which negatively impacted their teaching self-efficacy and made it difficult to communicate effectively with students, describing the situation as a "scramble."

Theme 6: Perceptions of Administrative Efficacy

Theme six centers around participants' perspectives on administrative competency in leading teachers during remote learning and the trust administrators had in teachers. Key factors included administrative actions, guidance, decision-making, organization, and planning. The clarity of communication and planning from administrators significantly influenced teachers' views. Participants' perceptions of administrative efficacy during remote teaching amid the COVID-19 pandemic varied widely. According to the study, Only 4 out of 11 participants positively perceived administrative efficacy, indicating a minority found the administration effective in leading remote teaching efforts.

Conversely, 5 out of 11 participants held negative perceptions, suggesting many teachers felt the administration struggled to manage the challenges of remote teaching. Meanwhile, 2 out of 11 participants were neutral, neither strongly agreeing nor disagreeing with the administration's effectiveness. These findings illustrate significant dissatisfaction and mixed opinions among educators regarding administrative support during the pandemic.

This theme also explored trust and mistrust, built or eroded through communication and actions. Micromanagement tactics and classroom observations were indicators of trust levels. Participant 2 felt that frequent check-ins suggested a lack of

trust from administrators. In contrast, others viewed these accountability measures positively, feeling that they validated their efforts and increased their engagement in the teaching process.

Verbal persuasion and observation of successes are crucial in building self-efficacy Bandura (1997). In remote teaching, trust in administrators and the competency of their guidance significantly influence teacher self-efficacy. Positive indicators include administrators being present during Zoom calls and encouraging educators, which can boost self-efficacy. Conversely, behaviors that may undermine self-efficacy include witnessing a lack of success (competency) and not receiving verbal encouragement, as these factors diminish confidence in remote teaching abilities.

Theme 7: Provided Support from the Administration

Participants had mixed feelings about administrative support during remote teaching. Participants' perceptions of administrative support during remote teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic varied significantly based on available resources. Six out of 11 participants viewed the support positively, emphasizing the importance of accessible resources like planning days and Zoom training. However, 5 of 11 participants expressed dissatisfaction, noting insufficient resources and training. This data underscores the diverse satisfaction levels and highlights the critical influence of resource availability on teachers' experiences during remote teaching. Administrators provided ample resources and professional development opportunities for using software, which many found beneficial for enhancing their effectiveness and learning new tools. Participant 3 indicated that the professional development provided by the administration

for Zoom was helpful, and learning how to use some of its features benefitted their students. Participant 3 expressed that "sharing my screen with kids and learning how to use the Whiteboard helped them to be able to learn; it was more like having a marker board in a classroom. So, that helped explain things better." Participant 11 mentioned that administrators offered a "toolbox" of resources, allowing teachers to choose which tools to use without strict guidelines.

Additionally, administrators facilitated planning days and teacher collaboration. Participant 4 indicated that these resources "helped them put their time and resources elsewhere, which made them feel like they had more time and energy for their students." The participants' perspectives on support by the administration through resources, planning, and professional development correlated to the framework of UTAUT Theory, as teachers felt more confident in integrating technology effectively into their pedagogical practices and enhanced overall teaching competence while teaching remotely.

Along with the UTAUT theory framework, administrative support is critical in teaching self-efficacy, even during challenging situations. This is revealed as Participant 9 shared their perception of support and how it positively impacted their efforts and self-efficacy, "Any time they felt supported," They would put in "more effort." Learning new tools, professional development, and support provided by the administration bolstered the efforts of teachers as they taught remotely. Participant 9 believed these impacts improved their effectiveness in teaching.

Teachers' feelings of autonomy in choosing resources and the perception that administrators were supportive reflect an internal locus of control. Several participants acknowledged that the administrative team was doing as much as they could despite their limitations. Participant 7 explained, "I really think that they did the best they could do under the circumstances that they were given. You know, you could go to them if you had concerns or questions." Teachers who acknowledged that these challenges were beyond their control also shared perceptions of positive to neutral support by the administration. "I think we were very supportive, and we did the best that we could in that situation," explained Participant 11. Participant 7 shared a similar view, indicating that "they tried to be as supportive as they could be. They tried to suggest and give us as many options as we could have. But I mean, at the end of the day, there are so many things that you're limited to". Teachers felt empowered and responsible for their success, although challenges beyond the district's control were acknowledged as obstacles.

Themes Conclusion

Exploring middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed themes shaped by multifaceted issues related to accessibility to technology, lack of student involvement, and teacher relationship with technology. Teachers' varying access to technological resources significantly influenced their confidence in navigating virtual classrooms, with disparities in digital infrastructure impacting instructional effectiveness. Moreover, the degree of student engagement played a pivotal role, highlighting challenges in fostering active participation and maintaining educational quality remotely. Additionally, teachers' personal attitudes

towards technology and their proficiency in its use underscored their adaptability and effectiveness in the online teaching environment.

Middle school teachers' perceptions of administrative support during the COVID-19 pandemic highlight a complex interplay of factors crucial to their self-efficacy beliefs. Effective administrative communication emerged as foundational, fostering a sense of clarity and direction amidst uncertainty. The relationship between teachers and technology underscored the importance of competent support in leveraging digital tools for effective remote teaching. Clear administrative expectations gave teachers a framework for navigating unprecedented challenges, enhancing their confidence in adapting instructional practices. Finally, adequate support from administration emerged as a critical determinant of teachers' self-efficacy, shaping their ability to meet the evolving demands of remote education. These insights underscore the profound impact of administrative support on middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs during the pandemic, reflecting broader implications for educational leadership and support strategies in times of crisis. These themes illuminated the complex interplay of factors shaping teachers' experiences during the pandemic, offering valuable perspectives for informing future educational practices and support mechanisms.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 11 middle school teachers who taught

remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic at the site location. Interviews were conducted using Zoom, transcribed using Turboscribe and coded for themes using NVIVO 14. Each participant's coded transcriptions to them to verify member check information. The data collected in this study was used to develop a project that would inform the site location's administrators and other shareholders on the impact administrative support has on teachers' self-efficacy during emergency school closures. School and teacher emergency preparedness must be a top priority for school districts, and understanding how to prepare and assist teachers and teachers during these times is essential to creating future safeguards for seamless transitions to different learning modalities. This project aimed to have school and district shareholders consider and implement a plan to support these safe holds by evaluating current plans and implementing new processes to address the local problem.

Member Checking

The member-checking process ensured that the interviewee's responses accurately reflected the thoughts and opinions of the participants. Member checking is a measure taken to ensure validity and rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Validating responses may occur during interviews by seeking clarification or paraphrasing a response (Gray, 2018). The process of member checking provides validation of responses after each interview. I sent each participant a copy of their transcript and coded responses to implement member checking. Personal responses were organized in a table. This table will contain the participants' quotes and the codes and definitions for each quote. Discrepancies in data provided an opportunity to further

review the data for validity by revealing information that may challenge or contradict themes (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). In the case of discrepancies, I will examine how the difference occurred and be sure to identify these discrepancies when analyzing and interpreting my findings. I emailed each participant their file to review for accuracy in the transcript and interpretation of the narrative. Participants responded, and all agreed that the information I provided and initially interpreted was accurate. Two mentions minor corrections about spelling and grammatical errors. These issues were corrected and did not interfere with any interpretation of the data

Research Biases

During a In a qualitative research project, the role of the interviewer is to approach the problem through the lens of a naturalist (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In the naturalist-constructivist paradigm, this viewpoint recognizes that while experiences are at the forefront of the study, biases from the researcher and subjects are inevitable by-products of the qualitative study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher must be cautious about biases hindering the study's veracity by avoiding interjecting personal biases and expectations into the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For this study, data was collected through semistructured interviews. According to Rubin (2012), semistructured interviews allow the researcher to narrow in on details that pertain to the phenomenon being studied by using a predetermined set of topics and questions to frame the interviews. The use of reflective journaling was implemented to avoid interjecting my own biases within the study. Reflective journaling allows the researcher to acknowledge personal bias, keeping the researcher accountable for how they interpret reality (Anfara et al., 2002).

Recognizing my personal preferences through self-reflective journaling, as critical self-reflection, is vital to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990).

The proposed study will utilize 10-12 middle school teachers within the school to participate in one-on-one semistructured interviews between 45-60 minutes each. Participants for the proposed research will be chosen based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and their consent to provide insight into their experience as middle school teachers who taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic school closures between March 2020 and June 2021 within the specified school site. A flyer will be created and sent to teachers in the school. This flyer will list the requirements needed to participate in the study. These criteria include being a middle school teacher and working there during the pandemic.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility and trustworthiness of the data and research results in understanding the problem (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the veracity of the research, one must consider multiple criteria that may impact the study's development. This begins with providing the methods of seeking participants, generating and implementing interview questions, and analyzing results in an accurate manner that demonstrates a cohesiveness that is free of bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following provides further information on how I will comply with IRB guidelines in the project study. This includes details on internal validity, dependability, and credibility.

Several steps were taken to ensure the study's trustworthiness. First, Member checking was utilized during each interview to check for clarification in participant

responses. After each interview was transcribed, participants were asked to review the transcription for clarity and accuracy. Finally, triangulation during research forced the researcher to consider multiple theories and results to reach a single conclusion (Noble & Heale, 2019). Using various perspectives ensures that the effects can outweigh biases, thus providing credibility and internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Internal Validity

Project studies investigate phenomena that occur in the real world by examining a small sample. This sample is purposely chosen based on the assumption that it can best represent individuals impacted by the problem we are investigating. The term internal validity relates to the ability of the small sampling to reflect results observed in nature (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The participants in the project may impact internal validity, the questions I asked in the interview, and other methods that needed to be adequately executed (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). This study explored the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of middle school teachers in teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs using semistructured interviews. To ensure internal validity within this study, participants must best reflect the population studied and provide transparent insight. This was done using inclusivity and exclusivity measures to seek participants who best reflected the population and field questions approved by professionals in curriculum, instruction, and technology.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability within a research project provides consistency in which a project may be replicated (Moon et al., 2016). To provide a high level of reliability within

research, methods, and procedures must be explicit to allow others to duplicate the study. This chapter explains how I planned to use research-based methodologies to conduct my study (Shenton, 2004). Conformability is the ability to convey the accuracy of participant responses as accurately as possible without the possibility of themes and responses being taken out of context (Johnson et al., 2020). Confirmability will be achieved through accurate data collection and member-checking.

Ethical Procedures

Protecting participants' identities and rights are a top priority for any research project. To comply with all codes of ethics for academic research, this research was reviewed by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for any possible infringement of the code of ethics for research projects in an educational study. One potential issue with my study was gaining consent to conduct interviews and maintaining participant anonymity. To address this issue, I included consent forms for all participants before interviews and gave each participant a pseudonym. As consent forms are signed and submitted, each participant will be assigned a code to remain anonymous and confidential during the study; Participant 1 will be identified as P1, and so on. This information was printed out and stored securely in a file at home. According to Walden University's IRB policy, all data must be retained for five years. No digital copies of this information will be held on my computer. I have also completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certification program for research code of ethics and compliance. Before beginning my study, the IRB reviewed my methodology and

data-analysis plan for possible ethics and compliance violations. No violations were found.

Summary

In Chapter Two introduces the methodological design and design rationale for conducting this qualitative research. This essential qualitative study explored middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research questions were: what middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic are, and how has administrative support impacted teacher self-efficacy in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The rationale for choosing a qualitative design for this research is that qualitative research focuses on interpreting phenomena based on participants' experiences and observing repeated patterns and themes found in the artifacts collected and analyzed (Burkholder et al., 2020).

Semistructured interviews were used to collect data from 11 middle school teachers. An interview protocol was field-tested by three subject matter experts in curriculum and technology to verify the validity of each question and used for the interview. Open-ended questioning and follow-up questions will allow each participant to share their story by giving a detailed description of their experiences remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Initial contact was made with the appropriate point of contact to gain access to the site (Appendix C). A recruitment flyer was sent to all school members, including pertinent details about the study and possible participation risks (Appendix D). Inclusive and exclusive measures to screen participants who have only taught remotely at the designated school during pandemic school closures. Purposive sampling allowed me to gain the most access to qualified participants that matched the population. Before interviews were scheduled, I ensured that each eligible participant signed a consent form, knowing their rights as participants. I gave each participant my contact information in case they had questions about the process before the interview; no participants had further questions. Interviews were scheduled based on the participant's availability and conducted using virtual Zoom meetings. Field notes and reflective journaling occurred while interviews were being conducted. A follow-up meeting may occur if clarification is needed for any quotes or comments made during the interview. At the end of the study, I gave each participant a $10 gift card to Starbucks.

Each interview was transcribed using Turboscribe and coded using NVIVO14. All codes were inputted into a spreadsheet to analyze for axial codes, related themes, possible discrepancies, and relations to conceptual theories. Interviews and coding continued until no new themes were discovered and saturation in the data occurred. Triangulation was used to check for trustworthiness in the data by identifying overlapping language and themes from different participants. This chapter provided further details on how I ensured credibility, validity, and confirmability with the test results and kept within the code of ethics for research. The findings of this study may

provide evidence of the impact administrative support during the COVID-19 pandemic school closure had on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in education. In addition, this study's outcomes could provide administrators insight regarding school preparedness for school closures and the implementation of distance learning in schools.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this project, I investigated how middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic were impacted. According to the study, teachers' beliefs were impacted by limited technology access to students, lack of student involvement in online classes, expectations of administration, and communication support by administration. A White paper report (See appendix A) was developed to provide recommendations to the BCMS school district, which would support the administrative staff and teachers in creating an emergency closure plan. This plan would address issues that were indicated in the study, such as creating professional development courses for teachers teaching remotely, providing clear expectations for teacher duties while working at home, creating a plan for distributing technology to students, and supporting the administration in developing positive digital leadership through professional development. The literature and findings in this project support this recommendation.

Description of Goals

This study aimed to provide the district with information that would help them shape their plan for handling school emergency closures in the future. Based on the problem and purpose of the study, it was determined that a white paper would best support the district, as it allows BCMS to make decisions that best reflect their needs. A white paper aims to provide research-based recommendations to BCMS stakeholders that support the development of a school closure crisis plan (cite). The role of a white paper is

to inform the public about the findings from this study and how it can be used to make informed decisions for policy change (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2024). This project relied on two research questions to investigate the experiences and memories of teachers as they taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these effects impacted their self-efficacy in teaching. The white paper outlines the findings, recommendations, and the teacher's comments as they reflect on their time teaching in a crisis. The report includes a summary of the data relating to the study's theoretical framework and provides four research-based recommendations for district preparedness. The white paper includes the following sections: introduction, background, methodology, findings, recommendations, and conclusion.

Rationale

Researching middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed themes shaped by accessibility to technology, student involvement, and teacher relationships with technology. Teachers' access to technological resources significantly influenced their confidence in navigating virtual classrooms, with disparities in digital infrastructure impacting instructional effectiveness. Additionally, the degree of student engagement played a pivotal role, highlighting challenges in fostering active participation and maintaining educational quality remotely. Additionally, teachers' attitudes towards technology and proficiency in its use emphasized their adaptability and effectiveness in the online teaching environment.

Middle school teachers' perceptions of administrative support during the COVID-19 pandemic highlight a complex interchange of factors crucial to their self-efficacy beliefs. Effective administrative communication emerged as foundational, fostering a sense of clarity and direction amidst uncertainty. The relationship between teachers and technology underscored the importance of competent support in leveraging digital tools for effective remote teaching. Clear administrative expectations gave teachers a framework for navigating unprecedented challenges, enhancing their confidence in adapting instructional practices. Perceptions of mutual trust between the administration and teachers were pivotal, influencing feelings of support and empowerment in implementing remote learning strategies. Finally, adequate support from the administration emerged as a critical determinant of teachers' self-efficacy, shaping their ability to meet the evolving demands of remote education. These insights underscore the profound impact of administrative support on middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs during the pandemic, reflecting broader implications for educational leadership and support strategies in times of crisis.

Given the complexity and depth of these findings, a white paper project would be the best way to disseminate the information. A white paper can comprehensively present the study's insights, offering detailed analysis and actionable recommendations to administrators and other stakeholders (Graham, 2013). It can effectively communicate the intricate dynamics between administrative support and teacher self-efficacy, providing a strategic framework for improving education's emergency preparedness and support

mechanisms. This approach ensures that the valuable perspectives from the study are accessible and actionable for informing future educational practices and policies.

Review of Literature

A scholarly literature review was conducted using the Walden University Library, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. This review not only aims to support each of the themes found in the study but also to find evidence supporting the recommendations of the project study as they pertain to the themes identified in the research findings. Keywords include teacher self-efficacy in teaching remotely, teacher professional development in digital learning, student perceptions and attitudes of distance learning, student equity in technology access: *Educational technology gap, administrative impact on teacher self-efficacy beliefs, professional development of administration for digital leadership, and school crisis plans.*

Teacher Self-efficacy in Teaching Remotely

Bandura's (1994) self-efficacy theory suggests mastery and practice play a vital role in teacher pedagogy. Therefore, when teachers have little exposure to using technology or specific programs, their perceptions of the ability to effectively teach are limited. Teachers' relationship with technology before the pandemic provides insight into how teachers utilized technology while teaching remotely and impacted their perspectives on their effectiveness.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory states that verbal persuasion, such as coaching and clear expectations, impacts an individual's self-efficacy. Positive self-efficacy arises from clear and expected outcomes. However, the lack of clear and consistent expectations from the

Administration created confusion, frustration, and helplessness among the participants interviewed. This inconsistency negatively impacted the self-efficacy beliefs of educators teaching remotely, as they needed clear guidance. As Bandura (1997) noted, "efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave," highlighting the detrimental effect of unclear administrative expectations on teachers' confidence and motivation.

Belief in teachers' ability to effectively impact students is crucial to student achievement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that many educators were challenged by factors beyond teachers' internal locus of control that negatively impacted self-efficacy (Tas et al., 2021). These factors, such as student engagement, participation in online classes, and administrative support, will be discussed further in this literary review.

Due to the sudden changes in teaching modalities, the lack of adequate planning, resources, training, and understanding of district expectations impacted teacher beliefs. This research used the concept of Bandura's self-efficacy as the theoretical framework. This framework suggests that experiences and successes build teachers' self-efficacy, suggesting that teachers with more experience as teachers (veteran teachers) have higher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching than newer teachers. However, this was not the case, as Pressley and Ha (2021) found that self-efficacy in teaching shows no direct correlation to experience and previous accolades in teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged these notions, as all teachers faced challenges implementing new teaching methods outside the classroom. Traditionally, teaching efficacy or self-efficacy was determined by

factors and outcomes directly related to the student, such as academic progress and motivation. However, teacher self-efficacy beliefs are also directly linked to the attitudes and behaviors of the educator. Adapting to change-set goals and demonstrating high levels of organization and planning skills are characteristics of educators with high self-efficacy in teaching (Lazarides & Warner, 2020).

The transition to online learning posed significant problems for educators as many new programs and learning management systems were expected to be learned and implemented quickly (Burke, 2024). Moreover, evidence suggests variances in software quality and resources, along with limited time for vetting programs, making it difficult for teachers to decide how to plan and organize lessons (Burk, 2024). Meisner and McKenzie indicated that locus of control was pivotal in developing teacher self-efficacy while teaching remotely. In other words, the ability to control delivery and personal skills in technology weighed heavily on a teacher's perspective on self-efficacy. This study expressed these sentiments, as several teachers indicated that they recognized that some of their challenges lay "beyond their control" and the control of the Administration." Tas et al. (2021) revealed that the overall teaching self-efficacy of educators teaching remotely during the pandemic was low. However, efficacy beliefs in utilizing technology before the pandemic impacted their teaching efficacy. While teaching efficacy is a multi-faceted concept, teachers with the necessary tools and skills to meet the challenges they face while teaching can persevere. Koray et al. (2023) examined how emergency closures impacted teaching self-efficacy. They found that self-efficacy differed significantly with

in-service training—suggesting the need to implement professional development for emergency school closures.

While the circumstances in which school closures occurred were unique, the challenges teachers faced during that time were not. Improving teacher self-efficacy beliefs is an important issue because of its direct impact on student achievement outcomes. Confidence in technology, planning, and organizing proved vital in building these beliefs. Therefore, professional development for teachers in these areas is crucial.

Teacher Professional Development in Digital Learning

The e pandemic, technology in the classroom, and learning management systems were geared toward supplemental curriculum (Johnson et al., 2023). As K-12 schools shifted to remote learning environments, there became a need to develop programs designed to meet the needs of children. One of these needs mainly was engagement. As teachers begin their journey as educators, we are often reminded of children's limited attention span and how this information should be considered when developing engaging lessons. According to Vawtner (2016), the average attention span of a middle school student is only about 10 to 12 minutes. If this is the case, it is no wonder middle school students have difficulty focusing on lessons while sitting on a computer for hours. Student engagement is the driving factor to student perceptions of learning. While it is difficult to examine how many students did not engage due to apathy compared to students who could not connect due to connectivity issues, the participants in this study shared similar concerns about student apathy and the lack of engagement of students who were connected. This evidence was relayed through the lack of student questioning and

off-task behaviors in Zoom classes. As mentioned in this study, it was evident to teachers that students were less engaged than they would have been in the classroom.

This raises important questions about student engagement during distance learning. Were some teachers more successful than others? And if so, how and why? To understand what makes some online learning environments more engaging to students than others, we must understand what shapes a student's attitudes and perceptions of school in general. Studies show a complex web between the social, emotional, and academic constructs that support students in school. Students' emotional and social interactions greatly impacted their perspectives on school and learning (Üstün, 2024). The stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted middle school students; inverse relations between COVID fatigue and engagement were found amongst this age group, emphasizing how social deprivation, routine disruptions, and general stress contributed to school aversion Hood et al. (2023).

These results demonstrate the importance of social interaction among students even while on lockdown. Nguyen (2023) reported an increased satisfaction in online learning environments with students whose classes included active learning. Therefore, we must consider not only what is age-appropriate but also what will meet the emotional and social needs of the learner. To meet these needs, teachers must use various pedagogies and multiple technology modalities to effectively engage the students, which can impede teacher self-efficacy beliefs (Miesner and McKenzie (2023). Based on the given research, one must consider how to implement all aspects of the student when developing learning management systems and teaching remotely. Teachers must

effectively address students' social, emotional, and academic needs while engaging them in various learning environments.

Student Equity in Technology Access: Educational Technology Gap

One of the major concerns teachers shared in this study was the need for students to have more access to technology and the internet. When 1,200 teachers were surveyed by tech-ed company Promethean on their biggest challenge," while teaching remotely, tech access and inequity were the most noted issues (35%) (Reimer & Hill, 2022). The digital divide, as it became known, negatively impacted not only students from low socioeconomic backgrounds but also children with disabilities, English language learners, and at-risk students (Zota & Granovskiy, 2021). According to NCES data, it was found that Black, Latino/Hispanic, and Indigenous American families were less likely to have internet access (Zota & Granovskiy, 2021).

In addition to socioeconomic issues, our nation's infrastructure continues to highlight disparities between urban and rural areas. According to the National School Boards Association (2023), it is estimated that 1 in 5 students in the United States live in rural communities. Like many towns in rural Georgia, fiber-optic broadband internet was unavailable in many areas, but more recently, the internet has become readily available with mobile broadband (Nazareno et al., 2022). This made it challenging to meet the needs of students during the onset of the pandemic. While the school may have had the option to distribute technology to students, it was not guaranteed that students had access to the internet. This revealed a multi-faceted problem within the community. Both infrastructure and socioeconomics widened the digital divide (Reynolds et al., 2022).

This study revealed how this issue impacted the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs at the site and emphasized how local policy plays a significant role in the achievement gap.

Student Perceptions and Attitudes of Distance Learning

Before the pandemic, technology in the classroom and learning management systems were geared toward supplemental curriculum (Johnson et al., 2023). As K-12 schools shifted to remote learning environments, there became a need to develop programs designed to meet the needs of children. One of these needs mainly was engagement. As teachers begin their journey as educators, we are often reminded of children's limited attention span and how this information should be considered when developing engaging lessons. According to Vawtner (2016), the average attention span of a middle school student is only about 10 to 12 minutes. If this is the case, it is no wonder middle school students have difficulty focusing on lessons while sitting on a computer for hours. Student engagement is the driving factor to student perceptions of learning. While it is difficult to examine how many students did not engage due to apathy compared to students who could not connect due to connectivity issues, the participants in this study shared similar concerns about student apathy and the lack of engagement of students who were connected. This evidence was relayed through the lack of student questioning and off-task behaviors in Zoom classes. As mentioned in this study, it was evident to teachers that students were less engaged than they would have been in the classroom.

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Administrative Support and Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Support systems of the administration for teaching dealing with distance was found to be a significant factor in the teacher's self-efficacy. Hancock and Poling (2023)

indicate that perspectives on support vary from teacher to teacher, even when teachers can identify specific problems they had while remote teaching. In this research, varying opinions about administrative support were revealed. Similarly, to Hayward and Ohlson (2023), teachers emphasized the importance of clear communication between teachers and administration. Teachers who expressed clear communication channels with the administration also expressed higher confidence levels than teachers who did not communicate with the administrative staff during school closures. Administrative trust is also a key component of teacher self-efficacy beliefs, as trust builds self-confidence (Winn et al., 2021). Building support systems for teachers is critical in building school culture. School districts must supply administrators with professional development that promotes self-efficacy in instructional leadership, as this has significant implications for building positive teacher self-efficacy (Dilekçi & Limon, 2022).

Administration for Digital Leadership

In addition to administrative professional development for instructional leadership, stakeholders should consider the impact administrative leadership has on teachers. Digital leadership is a form of school improvement that aims to push the organization to integrate technology within the classroom (Karaköse, 2023). This includes providing teachers with adequate resources and learning management systems that have been vetted by the district, providing professional development on specific topics aimed at promoting teacher tech-efficacy among the teachers and effectively assisting teachers in solving immediate problems related to the learning environment. Digital transformations within an organization are achieved when members utilize digital

information innovatively, changing the behaviors and processes of the organization (Hinings et al., 2018). Before the pandemic, very little was understood about the transformative role of digital leadership within a school (Berkovich & Hassan, 2023). The transition to online learning during school closures forced administrators and teachers to shift their mindsets regarding the application of technology for learning. Even in this research, teachers demonstrated restraint when utilizing technology, limiting its capability to transform the classroom. At the same time, the limited utilization of technology in the classroom is inevitably linked to teacher self-efficacy beliefs in technology. It must be predicated that administrators' behaviors and perceptions of the use of technology are the driving force behind the organization's willingness to evolve (Hamzah et al., 2021). Teacher self-efficacy beliefs are dependent upon their perception of the administration. Therefore, professional development for administrators in digital leadership and transformation is vital in transforming the whole organization's perceptions and beliefs in utilizing technology.

School Crisis Plan for Prolonged Emergency Closure

While reviewing the School Safety Plan Guide for Georgia Schools (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.), it was discovered that its immediate focus was handling acts of violence in the school and natural disasters. A limited plan for dealing with epidemics and pandemics was included in the plans, providing directives on when to close schools. There was no mention of how to continue learning during prolonged school closures, only alluding to the fact that local districts should reference local protocols. The lack of literature exemplifying school protocols for prolonged school

closures within the state and the district indicates a need for further planning focused on ways to avoid learning latency and the achievement gap. When the district decided to close the school on March 15, 2020, it was clear that the school did not have a protocol to follow. While it is fair to say schools were blind-sighted by the pandemic, the events that transpired after proved that one cannot be too careful, and planning is paramount. The themes provided in this study may be used as a scaffold for future stakeholder conversations. Issues such as technology access, roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff, and expectations for teaching and learning should be included in the plan. Teachers should feel confident in their expectations for providing instruction remotely and utilizing technology in a manner that is most conducive to teaching and learning. Administrators should provide clear guidelines to teachers, students, and parents about the teaching and learning outcomes expected during school closures. School districts should work with local authorities to meet the unique needs and challenges of the community and provide families with the resources they need to allow for a seamless transition to distance learning.

Project Description

The data in the project study suggest a need to provide further professional development in utilizing technology and improving engagement in learning management systems. Although the goal is to help students build efficacy in teaching remotely, the recommendations may apply to teaching remotely and at any time technology is used for learning. Upon reviewing the interviewees' concerns, participants indicated a need for professional development and administrative support. Based on the district's needs, a

white paper was chosen to present the organization with the problem and facts, enabling the district to develop solutions that are unique to the unique needs of the organization. A white paper report is an appropriate method to disseminate the findings in the project, as it focuses on providing data to the target audience, allowing the audience to make decisions.

The local problem addressed in this study is that distance learning was implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with little administrative support provided to the teachers for online instruction. The white paper provides five recommendations to address this issue. The first recommendation is to provide access to technology and the Internet to all students if schools must close over a long period. Secondly, administrators must create clear accountability measures for student academic progress. The third recommendation is to provide teacher training with high-quality, engaging learning digital-based resources. The fourth recommendation is to provide administrative training supporting transformative digital leadership. Finally, the last recommendation is for the district to create a crisis emergency plan for distance learning.

These recommendations are supported by the data-analysis findings from the research and the seven themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The themes revealed in the data are teacher relationship with technology, lack of student involvement, student accessibility to technology, administrative communication, administrative expectations, teacher perceptions of administrative efficacy, and provided support from the administration. Four out of seven of these themes focus on how leadership impacts educators' self-efficacy and administrators' role in supporting technology use. by

teachers. Recommendations are based on the experiences and perspectives of middle school teachers at the local site, as they taught remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are several possible barriers to face when implementing the recommendations in the white paper. These barriers include time for professional development and planning, staff attitudes toward technology, and involvement of community stakeholders. Implementing professional development and planning requires much time and effort on behalf of the local district. Depending on the approach, administrative professional development may take several days or longer. If the goal is to promote transformative change in technology, ongoing professional development in digital leadership may be the most appropriate approach for implementation. The administration may meet once or twice monthly and yearly while investigating and implementing methods to endorse digital leadership.

Teacher professional development may last several hours of a full day, depending upon the number of programs to be utilized, the complexity of programs, and the depth of knowledge. Follow-up meetings may be necessary to provide time for implementation, review, and questions. Because the recommendations aim to provide confidence and support to teachers as they use digital resources, providing a seamless transition to learning during prolonged school closures, teacher professional development should utilize vetted resources, which can be utilized both in the classroom and while teaching remotely. Teachers should have clear expectations about the frequency and method of using the vetted resources to ensure familiarity with the programs for teachers, students, and administration. This can be seen as a barrier because some teachers may feel

reluctant to use new technology. However, administrative staff must be available to provide a positive transition experience for teachers who have low self-efficacy beliefs about using technology. Schools must ensure that they have enough technology to meet the needs of students. If schools still need to be considered 1-to-1, funding may be necessary to update technology access. This will not ensure that all students have access to technology in the school but also if students must take devices home. The administration must organize and assign devices to students and develop a device loan agreement to safeguard against theft and damage. The district provides a plan explaining their expectations for the teachers and support staff while teaching remotely, providing support for English language learners and special education students, and grading and participation expectations. It is suggested that the districts provide these guidelines as an addendum to the handbook and crisis manual. Developing these guidelines will take time, as it is up to the district to consider appropriate expectations for each school.

Project Evaluation Plan

A White paper report was developed for this project. The purpose of a white paper report is to provide stakeholders with an in-depth analysis of a complex issue within the organization non-objectively (cite). The recommendations within the report are not only based on the findings in the analysis but backed by scholarly evidence related to understanding the conceptual framework and the topic at hand. The White paper provides a condensed synopsis of the study to be presented to the district's stakeholders for implementing positive change.

The district's superintendent, along with other permissible district members, will review the report to determine if the utilization of the paper and recommendations is deemed warranted for implementation. Currently, any stakeholders make any necessary alterations to meet the school's needs. All meetings, resources, and funding for this project must get approval from the Board of Education. A proposal, including the white paper and budget, will be presented to the board during monthly meetings. Once approved, I will meet with the middle school's administrative team to schedule subsequent meetings and professional development classes.

This project aimed to identify teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, the project's effectiveness is evaluated on teacher's opinions and beliefs in their effectiveness. To determine this, a summative evaluation is necessary. Once the recommendations have been fully implemented, teacher surveys will be utilized to assess how their perceptions of self-efficacy and behaviors toward technology have changed

Project Implications

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to schools across the nation. This project aimed to reveal how these challenges teacher beliefs about their effectiveness in teaching remotely. How organizations utilize and interact with technology is the root of the problem. While, by definition, it is used to make our lives easier, connecting us in ways we could not imagine in the past, technology can pose problems and reveal deeply rooted issues in education. At the heart of this study is the question about teacher confidence in teaching students while using technology. Confidence in technology begins with positive interactions and small successes. This

confidence leads to innovative applications. Just as technology is constantly evolving, teachers and schools must evolve and adapt to these changes. Policy changes must be adjusted to match these changes and their demands on districts and schools.

This study may assist in implementing these changes by supplying districts and schools with the s they need to make informed technology decisions. This includes training administrators and teachers, implementing effective programs and lessons, and providing technology options for those in need. These were some of the challenges that negatively impacted how teachers taught during the pandemic. COVID is still here, and schools are still in session! We have learned to adapt and move on. However, what we learned from this event has more significant implications for teaching. In school, where everything relies on routine and schedule, the uncertainty of what tomorrow may bring is a real threat. How we adapt and adjust to these threats impacts how students learn. This adaptation starts with utilizing the tools we have right now and building up our confidence in providing equitable education to all our students, both in the buildings and at their homes. These recommendations are provided in the white paper not only to guide how to respond in times of crisis but also to cultivate a transformative organization that is well-equipped for change, whatever it may be.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Section 4 provides the strengths and limitations of the qualitative study about teachers' self-efficacy beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. I will analyze alternative approaches for research as well as perspectives of outcomes. I share my journey through research and how it has shaped me as a leader and scholar. Finally, I will reflect on the lasting impacts this study has on future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The project included this white paper recommends teacher and administration professional development in technology for distance learning and digital leadership. Although another pandemic forcing schools to close is unlikely, providing professional development focused on recent changes and developments within learning management systems and digital resources plays a vital role in impacting the self-efficacy of teachers' beliefs about using technology for distance learning. Distance learning is not exclusive to pandemics. Distance learning and teaching can be used for a variety of reasons not related to school closures, such as homework, extended student absences, and course recovery. The recommendations presented in the project aim to optimize technology use for teaching and learning and guide the district toward equitable technological outcomes.

Eleven middle school, teachers from the local site, were interviewed using an interview protocol that was determined to be appropriate according to three subject matter experts. The responses from the semi-structured were gathered and analyzed to

identify themes related to the problem. The themes and thorough research on the subject generate recommendations addressing the problem.

This study investigated the issues that impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as they taught remotely. The theme that emerged from the study allowed me to identify possible solutions to improve teacher self-efficacy beliefs. Four or five? Recommendations were given in the white paper. Providing students with access to technology at home levels the playing field for technology access for all the students at the school. Proper training for engaging remote instruction ensures that students receive engaging and meaningful lessons readily available at school and home. Training in LMS and digital resources builds confidence in their ability to make planning decisions and utilize online learning platforms. Administrative training in digital leadership provides principals and assistant principals with the tools and resources needed to assist teachers effectively and promote transformation in the school by becoming role models for their school in their innovative ways of implementing technology. Lastly, a district planning for prolonged emergency school closures should include a plan for continued distance learning with clear expectations for teachers and families.

The initial purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data suggest that several factors, including student engagement, lack of technology access from students, and perceptions of administrative support, impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Participants shared that many used technology in the

classroom before the pandemic. The district was unprepared for the sudden shift to distance learning, and the limited expectations and communication from the administration and disparities with technology access from student families made it difficult to know what to do. While teacher self-efficacy is impacted by practice, training, successes, and positive affirmations, factors outside the teacher's ability can have adverse effects; mitigating these stressors improves self-efficacy by reducing negative perceptions of the event (Bandura, 1997). This study's recommendations focus on both factors through the method of preparedness. This involves engaging teachers and administrators in professional development to prepare them for situations like COVID-19. Eleven middle school teachers consented to participate in the study. One issue I had with the study was recruitment. In this study, I used a mediator to recruit my participants and included financial incentives for participants (Patel et al., 2003)..

Another approach would focus solely on teachers who have children in school and investigate how being a teacher and a parent enforcing digital learning at home impacted their organization but not part of the study and works as a liaison between the research and the possible participants (Kristen & Ravn, 2015). Several personal issues prevented me from forgoing the recruitment process during the recruitment. It was also difficult to schedule interviews due to participants' busy schedules. It is also challenging to get a hold of teachers during breaks, as some do not check their work emails. These issues led to delays in the recruitment process, and subsequently, my data collection process took much longer than initially anticipated. Recommendations for furthering this study may include looking at other schools within the region or state.

Recommendation for Alternative Approaches

A basic qualitative study was used to investigate middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school district's superintendent approved the school's participation, and teachers were notified by the study using a liaison. Purposeful sampling was used, and participants were chosen using an inclusion-exclusion criteria. A ten-question interview protocol, which three subject matter experts reviewed, was utilized to conduct 11 semistructured interviews. The following is a brief synopsis of different methods I could have used to explore the problem.

One alternative approach for the study is to investigate administrators' self-efficacy beliefs in their leadership during COVID-19 pandemic school closures. Participants expressed the lack of support and communication from administrators during the pandemic. Depending on the findings, recommendations for this approach would focus solely on the administration's self-efficacy. Participants mentioned that limited resources at home as teachers made it difficult for them to do their jobs while their children attended remote schools simultaneously. Based on the results of this approach, recommendations would be aimed at providing teachers with extra resources to assist with this issue.

Finally, some respondents revealed they were more prone to use technology than others. Upon further investigation, I noticed that teachers using more technology did so for reading and typing. Another approach for this study would be to

compare the self-efficacy beliefs of remote teaching based on content and subjects. Recommendations from this approach may focus on professional development based on specific subjects.

Scholarship, Project Development and Leadership Change

Scholarly work is vital to understanding the world and furthering research about a particular topic. As a former science teacher and art historian student, I value quality research to help me in both my professional and personal life. As a teacher, I used quality research to guide my choices in lessons and topics taught in the classroom. At the same time, having access to scholarly work provided me with resources that allowed me to make informed decisions. My doctoral journey has provided me insight into how scholarly research is developed. This experience has helped me to look at the world through a different lens; rather than forming opinions instantly, I find myself thinking about the opposing sides and possible reasons behind an event. I started this program with great excitement and trepidation. I knew that this journey would be a struggle for me. However, as time passed, I learned to be a better student, teacher, and leader. One of the most impactful impacts of this journey was my ability to be self-disciplined and resilient. This project has instilled in me methods for balancing life and work, as well as managing time, and challenged my work ethic by forcing me to push myself to meet deadlines and goals that I did not believe were manageable.

This journey allowed me to develop the skills to become a scholar-practitioner while promoting positive change within the community. This qualitative study focused on solving problems about teacher confidence and self-efficacy and revealing the root causes

impacting teachers' perceptions of teaching remotely during COVID. COVID and the challenges that come with it had a significant impact on the self-confidence of educators. Confidence and self-efficacy are deeply rooted in student academic success. Using conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy and current research, I developed a project to investigate this problem. With the guidance of my chair, academic advisors, and the International Review Board, I explored middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a former math and science teacher, I am more attracted to quantitative data to provide factual and measurable information. I found qualitative research intriguing, as it reveals data that relies on perceptions—and emotions rather than measurable indicators. Learning how to implement and analyze qualitative data was a challenge, but one that I am glad to have tried. Qualitative research forces the researcher to think about what questions to ask and to listen to the participant. I listened to the interviews, read the transcripts, and took notes. After hearing repeated concerns and similar experiences, I understood why qualitative research is essential to social sciences education and social change. The shared experiences of the interviewed participants reveal thematic issues that impacted their perceptions of self-efficacy. Qualitative research allows our understanding of an issue to be dynamic and unlimited, while quantitative data limits human emotions to a set of arbitrary scales.

Using Bandura's (1997) framework of self-efficacy theory and Venkatesh's (2003) unified theory of acceptance and use of technology, it was discovered that teacher

self-efficacy of teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the most Student accessibility and involvement, teacher relationship with technology, and perceptions of administrative efficacy. A second peer-reviewed literature review was conducted to investigate how other students confronted these issues. Based on reviews, it was found that teacher professional development, a commitment to social equity of students, and administrative digital leadership were ways to improve teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. This research allowed me to examine various facets of self-efficacy and the complexities of improving teacher confidence and student achievement. Both attributes have a significant impact on a school climate.

Reflection on Importance of Work

Walden's Ed.D. program has challenged me to investigate educational issues through the eyes of a scholar. As a student and scholar, I developed my craft as a researcher and an agent of change within my field. Although I was challenged every step of the way, this experience has given me so much confidence in my ability to seek out problems and formulate solutions. I felt a positive transformation in how I perceive myself. As I approached each hurdle, I learned how to persevere over them. This process has been a long journey for me, and at times, I did not believe I would have come this far. However, as I reflect on this experience, with all its trials and points of celebration, I am bewildered by how much I have learned about the scholarly process and myself. Ironically, while seeking to explore teachers' self-efficacy, the experiences, and interactions throughout this process have positively impacted my self-efficacy as a professional in the field of education.

One of the most significant impacts this program has had on me is improving my confidence in communication. I am a person who likes to observe things quietly; I am not much of a talker. However, interviews and presentations have forced me to leave my comfort zone. I feel more confident speaking professionally now that I have had a positive experience with it.

This experience has given me the experience needed to find organizational solutions. I learned to investigate and understand the related theoretical framework, use viable data collection and analysis techniques, and conduct deep scholarly research. Data analysis and research-based solutions are at the heart of good decision-making within an educational institution. Through this process, I have learned to be methodical in my ideas, focusing on what I have learned, observed, and analyzed. My professional decisions are not based on emotions but instead on the facts laid before me.

This study allowed me to hear teachers' concerns about personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely. It allowed me to hear teachers' concerns about personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely. Studying the self-efficacy beliefs of an individual was complex, as I felt emotions like those of my participants. I interviewed teachers from a wide range of backgrounds who taught various subjects and student abilities, and one of the most beneficial concepts I learned in my study is that all teachers sometimes feel a sense of low self-efficacy. What I found most interesting was that the impacts were universal in education. Concerns for student equity, administration/teacher communication, and access to viable resources correspond with many teachers. Understanding how to manage these issues using research-based solutions is paramount

in education. This experience has given me the experience needed to find organizational solutions..

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Teacher self-efficacy beliefs is essential to study because of its implications for students and learning. This basic qualitative study aimed to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. While researching the theoretical framework of Bandura's (1997) Self Efficacy theory and Venkatesh's (2003) Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology, two research questions were developed: What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic and What are middle school teachers' perceptions about how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic? Individuals' self-efficacy is cultivated through various complex factors that may or may not be impacted by the conditions found in this study. Personal factors, experiences, and beliefs on teaching, technology, administrators, students, and COVID-19 all play essential roles in developing teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching. Because of this complexity, I have only scratched the surface of this subject matter. This study provides the school and district insight into the teacher's psyche and ability to teach during the pandemic. While the pandemic seems to be in the past, the probability of another school closure due to a pandemic slows each day. The information gained from this study and similar ones is vital in understanding how preparedness, communication, and equity play a pivotal role in teaching self-efficacy,

regardless of prior experience. Schools and districts can benefit from this study by exploring plausible recommendations on combat issues considered top concerns of teachers. These recommendations were conveyed in the white paper report.

This qualitative study relied on semi-structured interviews, open coding, and analysis to investigate teachers' self-efficacy beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the data analyzed from the interviews of 11 teachers who taught remotely at the local school site and a deep scholarly review of literature on similar phenomena and theoretical framework, significant findings revealed that teacher's beliefs were significantly impacted by student access to technology, teacher relationship with technology, and interactions with administrators. Based on the findings and scholarly research, five recommendations were developed and explained in depth in a white paper report. These recommendations included providing ample access to technology for students, providing a variety of training for digital-based resources to teachers, creating clear accountability measures for student academic progress, engaging administrators in digital leadership training, and updating all standard emergency closure plans for all teachers to include procedures for distance learning.

The findings and recommendations in this study have positive implications for the district and beyond. It provides a local site with scholarly research focused on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on their teachers and schools and recommendations for changes that benefit the organization by addressing teachers' concerns. It also adds to the deeper conversation about COVID's impact on teachers and schools across the Nation by looking at a small rural community in South Georgia. Further studies may include

comparisons based on content or teacher experience and how these factors may have impacted their self-efficacy beliefs. Another study may investigate the self-efficacy of administrators during this time as well. This would allow for a cross-comparison of teacher and administrator self-efficacy beliefs during this time

Conclusion

Reflecting on my journey through Walden's Ed.D. program, I have seen firsthand the importance of teacher self-efficacy in cultivating student success. The challenges and triumphs of my academic journey have deepened my understanding of educational issues and fortified my confidence in addressing and solving these problems. My exploration of teacher self-efficacy, particularly in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealed that educators' confidence significantly impacts their effectiveness and resilience. The study underscored the necessity of administrative support and access to resources, crucial in bolstering teachers' self-efficacy. This experience has illustrated that, just as teachers benefit from feeling capable and supported, their students' success is directly tied to their educators' belief in their abilities. Fostering a supportive and resource-rich environment for teachers is essential for achieving the broader goal of student achievement and well-being.

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Appendix A: Project Study

Class is Still in Session: Recommendations for Improving Remote Teaching Initiatives during and after Emergency School Closures

By Alexandra Wright

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges to teachers, as efforts to mitigate exposure and spread of the virus caused many state and local governments across the United States to close schools. The decision forced an abrupt change in teaching, which exposed significant hurdles for public school educators (Martin et al., 2022; Webb et al., 2021). By April 2020, teachers at BCMS transitioned to remote teaching. However, the district needed to prepare to implement equitable learning for students, as it needed a plan for providing equitable online teaching (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020). This essential qualitative study explored middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The quick transition to online teaching challenged teacher's ability to adapt and strained their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching (Lazarides et al., 2021: Pressley, 2002). Teachers revealed their concerns about the lack of clear guidance for online learning and the limited infrastructure for technology that had affected student populations who were considered "at risk" (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020).

The teachers' concerns, expressed in the meeting, may have indicated how the abrupt change to remote teaching impacted the teaching self-efficacy as the quick transition to online teaching challenged teacher's ability to adapt and strained their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching (Lazarides et al., 2021: Pressley, 2002). Teacher self-efficacy is described as an educator's belief in effectively impacting student achievement

(Lazarides et al., 2021). According to Poulou et al. (2019), the link between teacher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching and student ability is critical in understanding how students achieve because teacher confidence accurately indicates student performance.

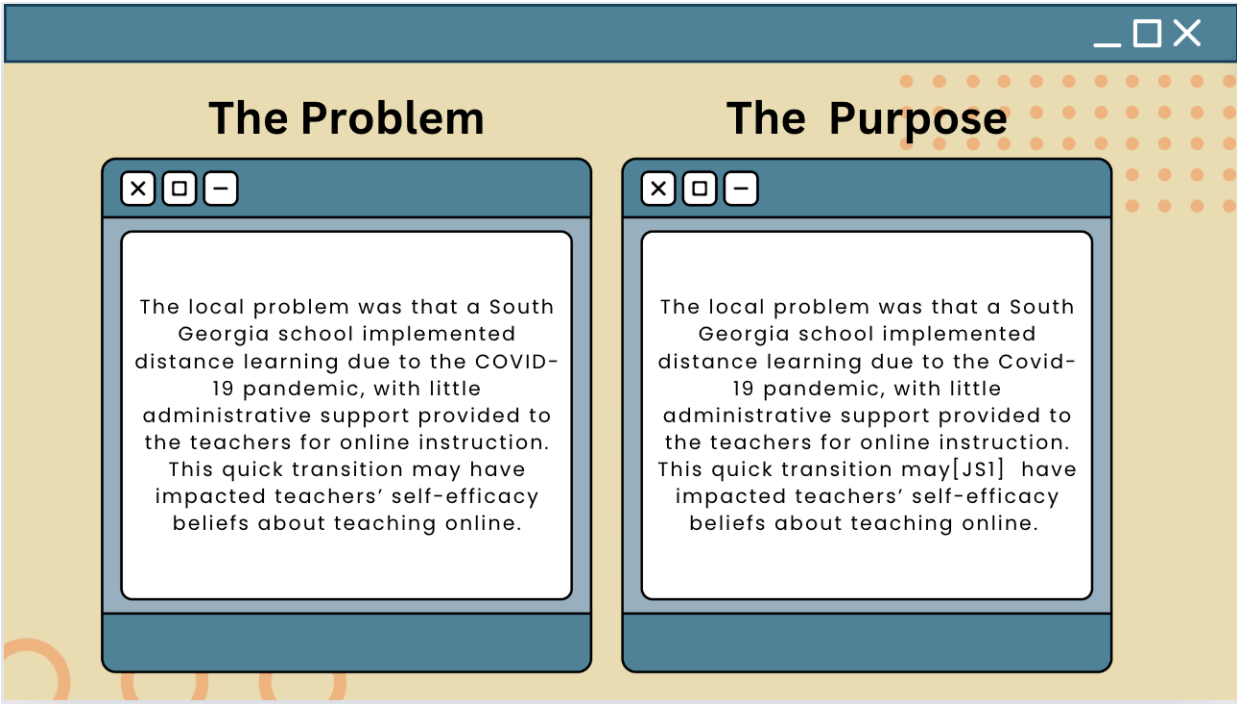
This white paper explores these critical issues, highlighting their impact on educational outcomes and proposing strategies to bolster teacher support and student equity in future crises. This basic qualitative study aimed to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following research questions were utilized in this study. .

Research Question 1 (RQ1) What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question 2 (RQ2) What are middle school teachers' perceptions about how administrative support affected their self-efficacy beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Local problem

The local problem was that a South Georgia school implemented distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with little administrative support provided to the teachers for online instruction. This quick transition may have impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching online. It is unknown how the lack of administrative support impacted teachers' self-efficacy for online instruction during the pandemic. This study focused on middle school teachers' experiences and memories with online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic at a South Georgia school. With the onset of the pandemic, the school quickly transitioned to distance learning, presenting significant challenges exacerbated by minimal administrative support.

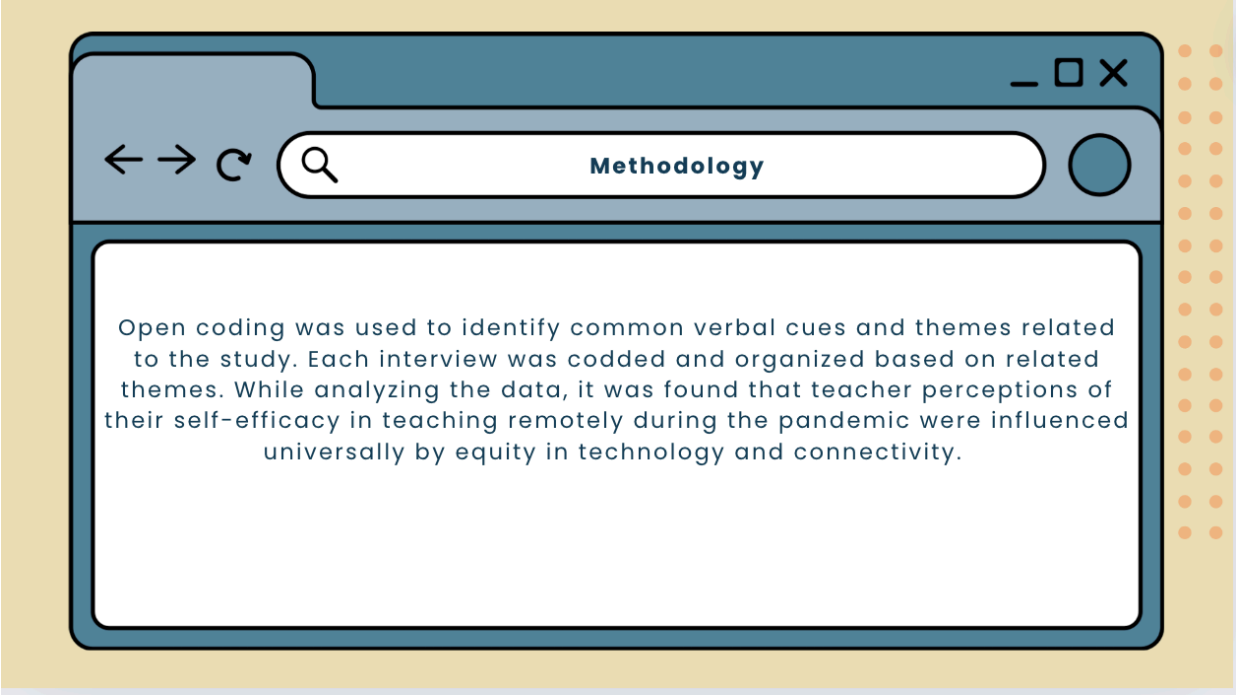


Due to the Pandemic and the unforeseen impact it had on schools, the Georgia Department of Education modified accountability measures, allowing districts the flexibility to employ the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) for Teacher evaluations during the Pandemic (Georgia Department of Education, 2020; Professional Association of Georgia Educators, 2020). Although these changes were adopted locally, educators expressed high levels of concern for students' equitable access to technology, clear instructional expectations, and administrative support while teaching remotely (Grade Level Departmental Meeting, 2020). These concerns may have potentially impacted teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely. With insufficient preparation and guidance, this abrupt shift likely affected teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, thus impacting their confidence in their ability to teach online. This lack of support may have affected teachers' perceptions and experiences during the Pandemic.

Summary of the Study

Methodology

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about online instruction and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. These beliefs were revealed through participants' memories as they reflected on their experiences teaching remotely during the COVID-19 Pandemic and how these experiences impacted their perception of their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching. Data collection was conducted by interviewing eleven middle school teachers at the local site. Data included reflections, perspectives, memories, and experiences teaching remotely at the local site during the pandemic.

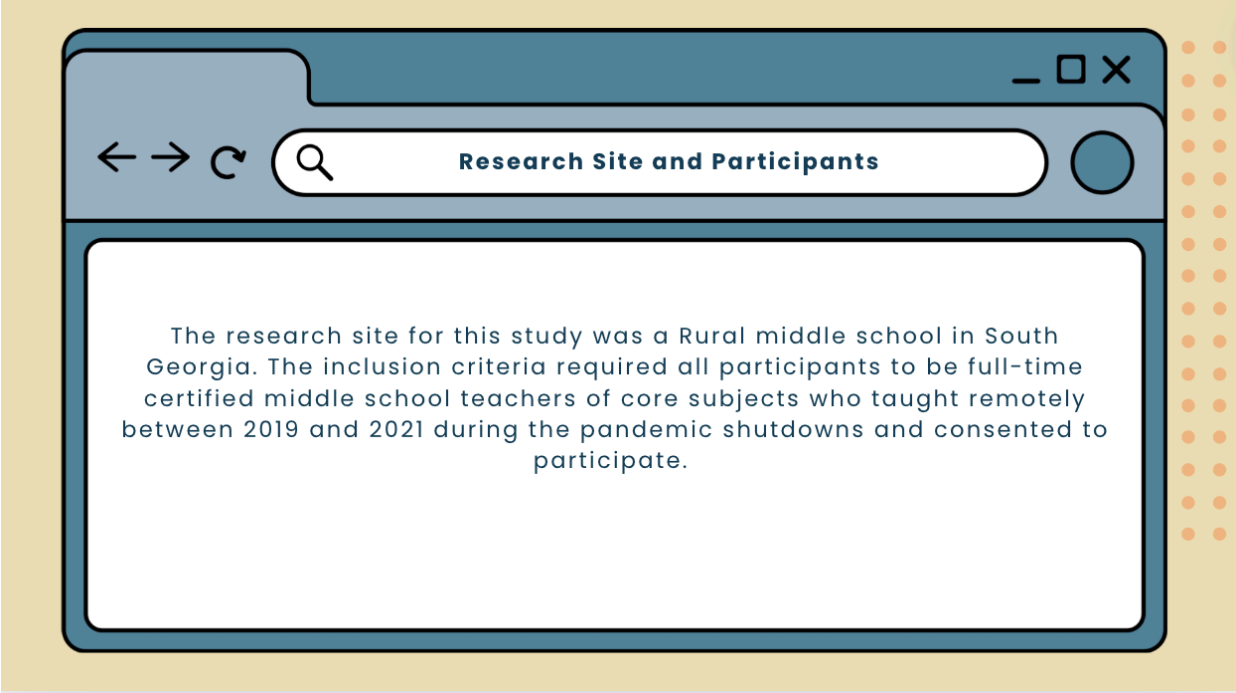


Bandura's Self-efficacy (1997) Theory framework was used to identify the factors that impacted the teaching self-efficacy of participants to teach remotely during the COVID-10 pandemic. The Self-efficacy framework assisted with identifying and analyzing teacher responses as they reflected on teaching remotely and how these experiences shaped their perspectives on their effectiveness as teachers. Bandura's self-efficacy theory states that individuals' beliefs in their ability to achieve specific outcomes influence their actions. This theory is rooted in the social cognitive theory, which highlights the impact of both external and internal factors on self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Bandura (1997)) emphasizes environmental factors, observational learning, and symbolic learning as key proponents of shaping behavior. Teacher self-efficacy is a concept identified by Gibson and Dembo (1984) and focuses on educators' beliefs in their ability to positively impact students' academic success. Self-efficacy beliefs in teaching develop through personal experiences, successes, and observing successful peers (Woo et al., 2019). Woo et al. note that teacher self-efficacy is crucial for creating effective teaching environments and improving educational outcomes.

This study also relied on Venkatesh's (2003) Unified Theory of Acceptance of Technology (UTAUT), as a framework and a guide for developing the instrument for data collection. This theory relies on a combination of eight behavioral and technological models to explain how attitudes and behaviors influence the acceptance and use of technology. As teachers shifted from traditional teaching modalities to distance learning, how teachers embraced these changes and utilized new tools such as video-conferencing programs provided clues on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as they taught remotely.

Both theories informed the study by providing insight into how self-efficacy is developed and how teachers' perspectives and engagement in technology promote utilization.

A basic qualitative design approach was utilized to conduct interviews with eleven teachers. According to Cresswell (2018), qualitative researchers interpret how experiences shape the views and opinions of participants through interviews. The reliance on descriptive data to reveal trends within participants' experiences engages the researcher in making informed judgments about the phenomena (Eyisi, 2016). In this study, eleven middle school teachers from the BCMS school district were t asked to reflect on their experiences while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic at BCMS. I believe the experience shared in these interviews provides insight into how the behaviors and perspectives of a participant impact their self-efficacy.

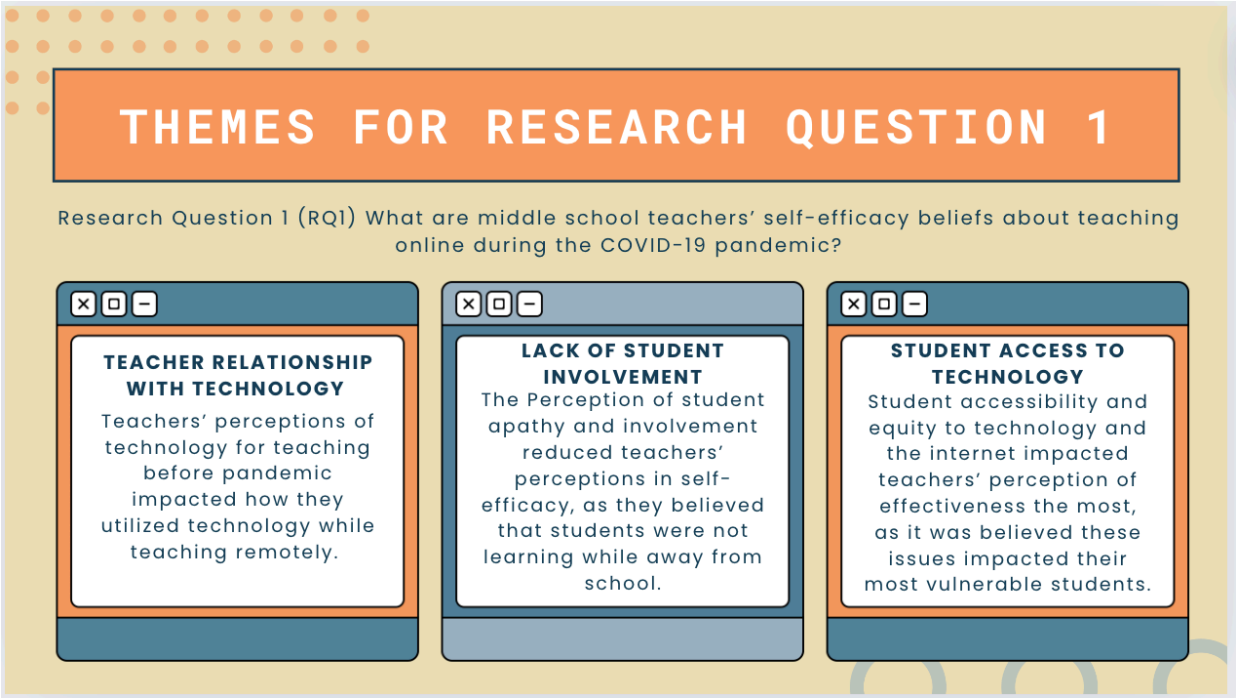


Middle school teachers who met the inclusion/exclusion criteria consented to participate in the study. The research site for this study was a Rural middle school in South Georgia. The inclusion criteria required all participants to be full-time certified middle school teachers of core subjects who taught remotely between 2019 and 2021 during the pandemic shutdowns and consented to participate. A purposeful sample was used to ensure that participants met the criteria for the research. The exclusion criteria included refusal to consent or inability to participate in the interview process, not being a full-time certified teacher at the site, not teaching a core subject (Math, Language Arts, Science, or Social Studies), and not teaching remotely during the shutdowns. Eleven participants who met the criteria were interviewed for up to 1 hour on their experiences in teaching remotely. Interviews were guided using an interview protocol, which the subject matter experts validated. This protocol included ten questions to help answer both research questions. Elicitation techniques were used during the interview to identify verbal and non-verbal cues relating to the subject. Each interview was conducted on Zoom, and proper measures for confidentiality and anonymity per the IRB were followed. Open coding was used to identify familiar verbal cues and themes related to the study. Each interview was codded and organized based on related themes. While analyzing the data, it was found that teacher perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching remotely during the pandemic were influenced universally by equity in technology and connectivity..

Data Analysis Findings

After analyzing the data, Seven themes were identified, each answering one of the two research questions. Themes answering research R.Q. 1 are as followed:

Student access to technology Student accessibility and equity to technology and the internet impacted teachers' perception of effectiveness the most, as it was believed these issues impacted their most vulnerable students.



Theme 1: Teacher relationship with technology

The relationship with technology was the first theme uncovered from the data, divided into three categories: teachers' self-efficacy in using technology, pre-pandemic technology implementation, and remote teaching during the pandemic. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all surveyed teachers used classroom technology, with 9 out of 11 participants feeling confident in its integration, although 5 out of 11 teachers preferred

pencil and paper. During the pandemic, 7 out of 11 teachers had negative experiences due to issues with specific resources, despite prior confidence. According to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, mastery, and practice are essential, and limited exposure to technology can hinder teachers' perceptions of their teaching ability. Interviews revealed that all teachers used technology to varying degrees before and during the pandemic, with some more comfortable and successful than others. Remote teaching posed challenges, especially for those less familiar with technology, while those accustomed to daily tech use faced issues like internet access and student device limitations. Most teachers utilized videoconferencing tools such as Zoom and Google Meet, along with other programs like Google Classroom, to engage students and conduct remote lessons.

Theme 2: Lack of Student involvement

Theme two revealed that teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching during the pandemic was significantly affected by student behaviors. Data showed that 18% of teachers cited student apathy as their primary challenge, while 63% indicated that student engagement negatively impacted their teaching efficacy. Teachers observed decreased student participation in lessons, reluctance to complete assignments, and fewer students participating in Zoom meetings over time. Some students attended Zoom sessions more for social interaction than academic purposes, with teachers noting a disconnect despite efforts to create engaging activities. While online teaching allowed some students to share their personal lives, it did not correlate with increased academic engagement. Teachers were concerned about students' understanding, as it was hard to gauge through

remote learning, and they felt that there was a lack of recourse for poor student behavior, further affecting their ability to teach effectively.

Theme 3: Student Access to technology

Student accessibility to technology was a critical theme affecting teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching during the pandemic, with 10 out of 11 of participants identifying connectivity issues as the most crucial factor for teaching effectiveness. Additionally, 5 out of 11 participants cited device accessibility, and 1 out of 11 mentioned other related issues, highlighting the significant challenges in ensuring students had reliable internet and technology. Socioeconomic factors played a crucial role, disproportionately impacting lower-income students who lacked the resources for remote learning. In response, some schools implemented assignment pick-up/drop-off systems, but this did not fully address the need for student-teacher communication. Teachers felt a pervasive sense of inequity and frustration, particularly for students in rural areas with unreliable internet, and expressed emotional strain due to their inability to reach and engage all students effectively.

Theme 4: Administrative Communication

Administrative communication during the COVID-19 pandemic involved methods, frequency, and teachers' perceptions, impacting their self-efficacy in remote teaching. During this period, 10 out of 11 teachers communicated with the administration primarily through email, while 1 participant indicated using that they used video conferencing. Perceptions of these interactions varied, with 4 out of 11 teachers reporting negative experiences, 3 out of 11 teachers feeling neutral, and only one expressing satisfaction. Many teachers felt that communication was unclear and unsupportive, with Participant 4 describing it as "very intense" and lacking sympathy and Participant 8, a first-year teacher, noting the absence of supportive outreach. However, some, like Participant 3, had a positive experience, stating that administrators were available for communication and facilitated knowledge sharing among teachers. Despite

established communication channels, most teachers perceived the quality and consistency of interactions negatively or neutrally, impacting their self-efficacy beliefs. As indicated by Bandura's theory, effective communication is crucial for reinforcing teachers' confidence in handling challenges, including remote teaching during the pandemic.

Theme 5: Administrative Expectations

Administrative expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic outlined the roles and responsibilities of teachers, including work hours, online class frequency, lesson plans, and communication methods. The study revealed that 10 out of 11 teachers received directives from administrators, while one participant did not, indicating a communication gap for a small portion. Among those who received directives, half had positive feelings about the guidance, appreciating its clarity and support, while one expressed negative feelings, indicating dissatisfaction or challenges, and one felt neutral. Teachers reported inconsistent expectations and communication methods, with some experiencing rigid guidelines and others not. Expectations included daily assignments in Google Classroom, bi-weekly videoconferencing, and availability during regular school hours, but there needed to be a clear plan for student accountability. Participant 10 was vague and did trickle down to teachers through team leads and not directly from administrators ." While some found these expectations reasonable, many felt frustrated due to the lack of student accountability and the significant learning curve required. Administrators occasionally joined Zoom meetings unannounced to ensure compliance, but the absence of student accountability led to feelings of helplessness and confusion among teachers. According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, clear and consistent

expectations are crucial for positive self-efficacy, but the lack of these from the Administration negatively impacted teachers' confidence and motivation.

Theme 6: Teacher Perceptions of Administrative Efficacy

Theme six centers around participants' perspectives on administrative competency and administrators' trust in teachers during remote learning. Key factors included administrative actions, guidance, decision-making, organization, and planning. The clarity of communication from administrators significantly influenced teachers' views, with only 4 of 11 teachers responding positively about their perceptions of administrative effectiveness.

Negative perceptions of administrative efficacy were expressed by 5 out of 11 participants, suggesting many teachers felt the administration struggled with the challenges of remote teaching. Meanwhile, 2 of 11 were neutral regarding the administration's effectiveness. Four out of 11 participants expressed that administrators did all they could do based on the circumstances. Participant 8 stated, "was doing what they could do at the time and under those circumstances." At the same time, others indicated that micromanagement tactics and classroom observations influenced trust levels. Some teachers felt frequent check-ins indicated a lack of trust, while others appreciated these measures to validate their efforts. Participant 10 said, "It was just so bad getting them to do anything. And of course, just the micromanaging from administration at that point, the constant hovering over things". According to Bandura, verbal persuasion and the observation of successes are crucial in building self-efficacy;

thus, trust and competent guidance from administrators significantly impact teacher self-efficacy in remote teaching.

Theme 7: Provided Support From Administration

Participants had mixed feelings about administrative support during remote teaching. A majority of 6 out of 11 participants viewed the support positively, emphasizing the importance of accessible resources like planning days and Zoom training, while 5 out of 10 expressed dissatisfactions, noting insufficient resources and training. Administrators provided ample resources and professional development opportunities for using software, which many found beneficial for enhancing their effectiveness. For instance, Participant 3 appreciated the professional development of Zoom, which helped them explain concepts better using features like screen sharing and the Whiteboard. Participant 11 mentioned that administrators offered a "toolbox" of resources, allowing teachers to choose which tools to use without strict guidelines. Participant 4 found that planning days and teacher collaboration were helpful. Teachers felt more confident integrating technology effectively into their pedagogical practices due to this support, aligning with the UTAUT theory framework. Positive perceptions of administrative support were linked to increased teacher effort and self-efficacy, as Participant 9 revealed that feeling supported led to a more significant effort in teaching remotely.

Recommendations

Provide access to technology and the Internet to all students

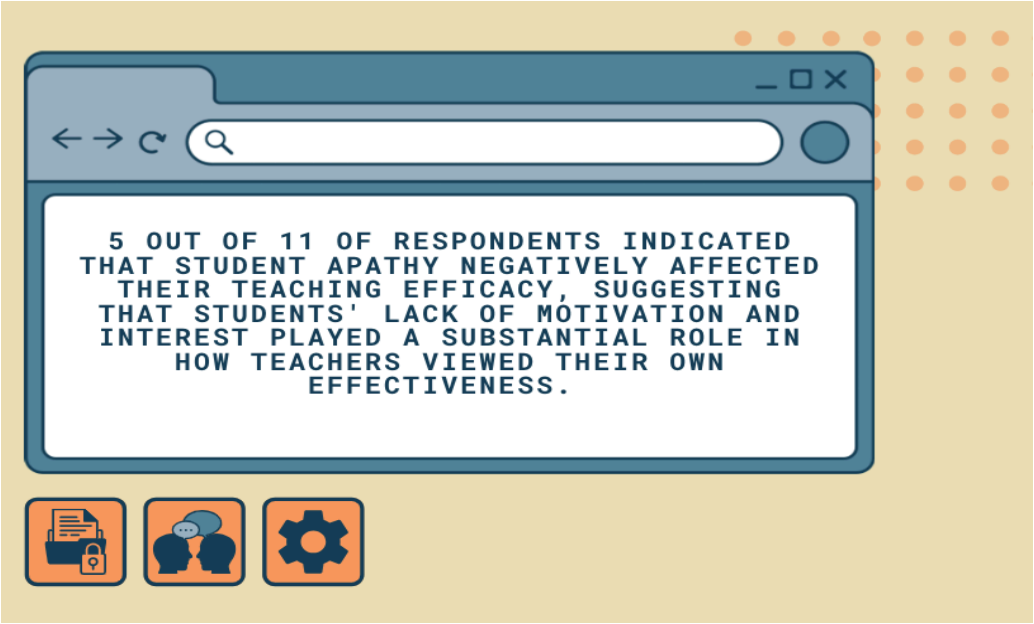
The data revealed that 100% of participants indicated that student accessibility and connectivity for technology were the biggest key factors in their teaching self-efficacy beliefs while teaching remotely. The lack of adequate access to devices and reliable internet at home hampered students' ability to participate fully in digital learning. This inequity affects their academic performance and overall learning. Equity in education is the best indicator of student success (Ogundari, 2023). However, a 2019 National Assessment of Education Progress questionnaire revealed that 12% of 8th graders nationwide needed access to digital technology (National Center for Education Statistics. n.d.) Moreover, many districts need to pay more attention to the complexities of integrating technology into education and its impact on equitable learning.

To address these challenges, the district should develop a comprehensive plan to ensure all students have access to the necessary technology and Internet at school and home. This plan should include provisions for distributing devices, providing technical support, and ensuring affordable internet access for all families. By implementing these measures, The district can create a more equitable learning environment and support the academic success of every student, especially during emergency school closures.

Create Clear Accountability Measures for Student Academic Progress

Student behaviors significantly impacted teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching remotely during the pandemic. Specifically, 2 out of 11 respondents identified student engagement as their biggest challenge, highlighting difficulties maintaining student interest and participation in a remote setting. Additionally, 5 out of 11 respondents indicated that student apathy negatively affected their teaching efficacy,

suggesting that students' lack of motivation and interest played a substantial role in how teachers viewed their effectiveness. These findings underscore the critical influence of student behavior on teachers' confidence and perceived success in remote teaching environments.

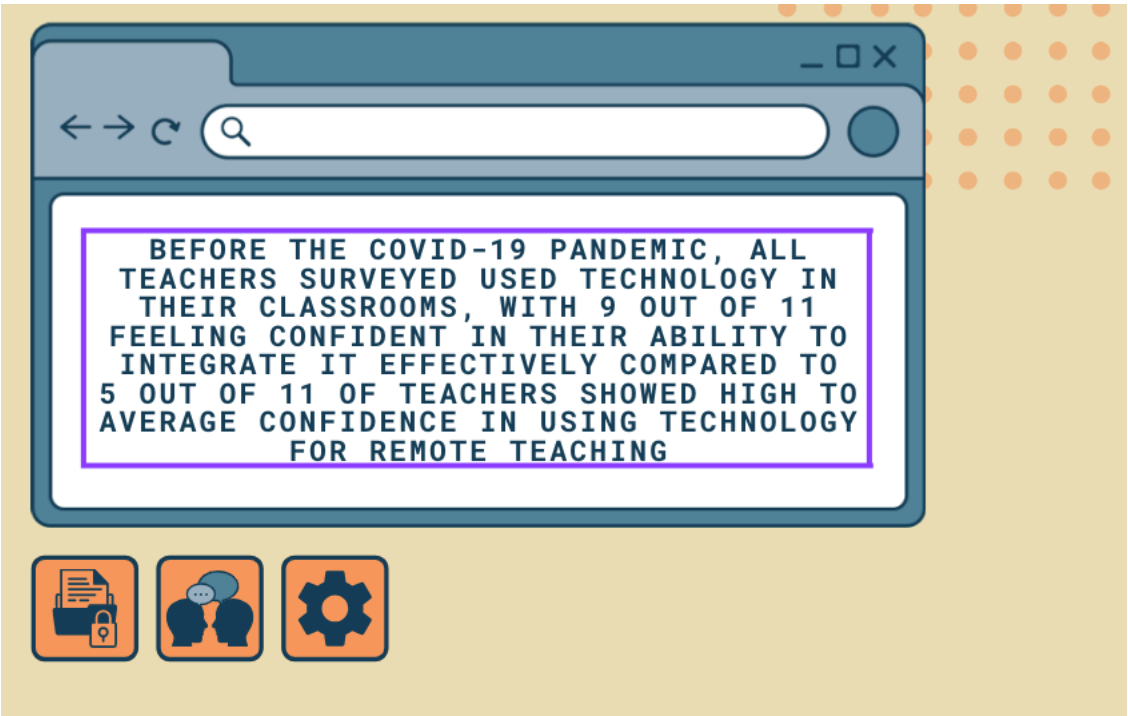


Gopika and Rekha (2023) indicate that while the COVID-19 pandemic has promoted the use of e-learning environments and has made a positive impact on student abilities in the learning environment, students indicate that e-learning environments are less engaging, thus contributing to the lack of motivation among students (Gopika & Rekha, 2023).

Given these challenges, it is recommended that the district develop clear student accountability measures to ensure students are held accountable for their work during

emergency school closures. These accountability measures should establish consistent and standardized methods to hold students accountable for their progress, implement academic support systems accessible to all students, and prioritize teaching decisions based on student progress. Implementing these measures will help address engagement and motivation issues, ultimately supporting student learning and teacher efficacy in remote teaching environments.

Provide Teacher Training High Quality Engaging Learning Digital-Based Resources

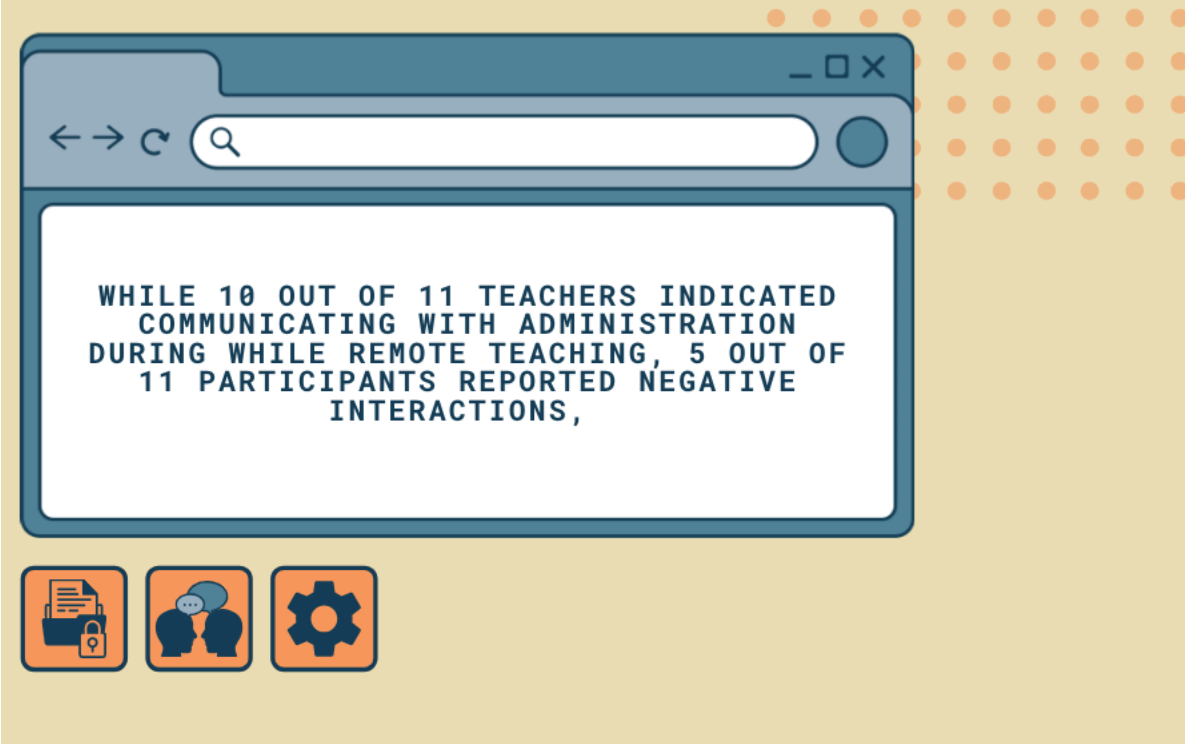


Provide Administrative Training Supporting Transformative Digital Leadership

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all teachers surveyed used technology in their classrooms, with 9 out of 11 feeling confident in their ability to integrate it effectively,

although 2 out of 11 preferred traditional methods like pencil and paper. During the pandemic, 5 out of 11 teachers indicated high to average confidence in using technology for remote teaching, embracing various resources, and expanding their skills. However, 1 out of 11 expressed negative sentiments, citing issues with specific resources, and 4 out of 11 felt neutral due to mixed experiences and concerns alongside benefits. This data underscores a contrast between teachers' pre-pandemic confidence in classroom technology and their challenges when transitioning to remote teaching (Haverback, 2020).

To address this gap and enhance teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching environments, it is recommended that professional development be provided to teachers. Johnson et al. (2023) stated that teacher training is pivotal in the success of distance learning. Thus, professional development should focus on high-quality, engaging digital resources and strategies to maintain student interest and participation. Guidance on evaluating and selecting adequate digital resources tailored to various subjects and grade levels is also crucial. Establishing support systems, such as mentoring programs or tech support teams, may assist teachers as they integrate new technologies. Finally, creating feedback mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of professional development programs and adjust based on teachers' needs and experiences will ensure continuous improvement.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, 10 out of 11 teachers reported some level of communication with the administration, primarily through email, with only 1 out of 11 recalling video conferencing as a method of communication with the administrative team. Despite this high level of communication, perceptions varied significantly: 5 out of 11 participants reported negative interactions, 5 out of 11 felt neutral, and only one teacher indicated positive interactions. Additionally, only 4 out of 11 teachers positively perceived administrative efficacy in managing remote teaching, 5 out of 11 held negative perceptions, and 2 out of 11 were neutral. This data suggests that although communication channels were established, teachers often perceived the quality and effectiveness negatively or indifferently, indicating notable dissatisfaction and mixed experiences regarding administrative support during the pandemic.

School administration leaders are vital to enhancing education quality by enhancing student learning and motivating staff participation in school improvement (Dare & Saleem, 2022). Leadership qualities in communication and decision-making are crucial to impacting teachers' self-efficacy. However, it was found that most teachers held negative perceptions of their administrative team's effectiveness in leadership. To address these challenges and improve administrative efficacy, it is recommended that professional development in digital leadership be provided, focusing on communication and administrative efficacy in navigating digital environments. This plan should include training administrators on effective communication strategies using various digital tools like video conferencing to enhance interaction quality. Implementing regular feedback mechanisms to understand teachers' concerns and improve administrative support is crucial.

Additionally, developing crisis management and adaptive leadership training will help better handle remote teaching challenges. Introducing and training administrators on collaborative digital tools can facilitate better engagement and support for teachers. Ensuring continuous learning opportunities for administrators to keep up with evolving digital leadership practices and tools will further enhance administrative support and communication, leading to a more effective and cohesive remote teaching environment.

Develop a District Crisis Emergency Plan for Distant Learning

Participants' perceptions of administrative efficacy while teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a range of views, with only 4 out of 11 teachers expressing a positive perception. In contrast, 5 out of 11 teachers held negative perceptions, indicating that many teachers felt the administration did not effectively manage remote teaching challenges. Meanwhile, 2 out of 11 were neutral, neither strongly agreeing nor disagreeing with the administration's efficacy. When asked about administrative expectations, 10 out of 11 participants reported receiving directives or expectations from administrative staff, with 4 out of 10 expressing negative feelings about these expectations. This distribution highlights notable dissatisfaction and mixed

experiences among educators regarding administrative support and expectations during the pandemic.

To address these issues, it is recommended that districts should develop an emergency crisis plan for distance learning, addressing the challenges related to emergency closures. This plan should include clear teacher expectations for remote teaching, updated grading policies, established methods of communication, and strategies for the distribution of technology to students and teachers if needed. By implementing such a plan, districts can ensure better preparedness and more effective management of remote teaching scenarios, ultimately improving administrative support and teacher satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for educators, particularly in South Georgia, where the sudden shift to remote teaching underscored significant issues with administrative support and technology accessibility. This study highlighted how these factors profoundly affected middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in online instruction during the pandemic. Teachers faced immense difficulties adapting to online teaching without adequate administrative guidance or technological resources. These challenges strained their confidence in their teaching

abilities and impacted student outcomes, particularly those already considered at risk.

The study found that teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in remote teaching were closely intertwined with the availability of technology and equitable access for students. Overwhelmingly, teachers cited student accessibility and connectivity as crucial factors influencing their teaching effectiveness. The lack of consistent access to devices and reliable internet hindered students' ability to engage fully in remote learning, affecting teachers' confidence in their instructional impact.

Moreover, administrative support was pivotal in shaping teachers' experiences and perceptions. Despite efforts to communicate expectations and provide support, many teachers reported mixed feelings or dissatisfaction with administrative efficacy during the pandemic. This inconsistency in support compounded the challenges teachers faced,

contributing to varying confidence levels in their ability to navigate remote teaching environments effectively.

Recommendations emerged from the study to address these issues comprehensively. Essential suggestions include developing robust plans to ensure universal access to technology and internet connectivity for students, establishing clear accountability measures for student engagement and academic progress during remote learning, and providing extensive training for educators in utilizing digital resources effectively. Additionally, enhancing administrative training in digital leadership and crisis management could improve support structures and communication channels, fostering a more cohesive and supportive environment for teachers during future crises.

Ultimately, this study underscores the critical need for proactive measures to support educators and students adapting to remote learning environments. By addressing these challenges systematically and implementing evidence-based recommendations, educational institutions can better prepare for future disruptions while enhancing teacher efficacy and improving student educational outcomes. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, ongoing support and adaptation will be essential in fostering resilience and maintaining effective teaching practices in times of uncertainty.

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Appendix B: Codes/Categories/Themes

TABLE 1:Codes/Categories/Themes

Code	Example	Number Of Occurrences	% of Participant	Common Categories	Research Questions	Theme
Pencil and pencil	P11 stated "They were a paper and pencil teacher"	11	5/11= 45%		RQ 1	Theme 1:Teacher relationship with technology
Google suite as primary source of instruction	P4 stated "Students communicated through email and through the Google Classroom discussions and assignments." P6 "we were still, we were still doing paper, pencil work. And, you know, just given the option to join a Zoom call or a Google meet at a specified time to say, okay, well, if you need help"	73	6/11=54.5			
Confidence in tech prior	P2 "stated they felt very tech savvy before the pandemic." P3 go find a video on YouTube that would match and be appropriate." P10 "Before the pandemic, we used Google Classroom quite a bit, but we used it in more	45	9/11=81.8%	Perceptions using tech prior	RQ 1	

	of a supplementary role in our classroom"					
Negative perceptions of using technology during closure	P 6 stated "When we first went out, we really were not prepared "	12	7/11=63.3%	Perceptions of efficacy using tech during the pandemic	RQ 1	
apathy	P1 stated "The challenges were you always have your apathetic students in the classroom with technology, they have that option to just turn it off and not be there"	2	2/11 18.1%	Perception of student behaviors with technology	RQ 1	Theme 2: Lack of Student involvement
engagement		14	7/11=63.3%			
participation		9	7/11=63.3%			
Connectivity	P9 stated They "didn't have access to technology very much and they couldn't do it on their phones"	16	7/11=63%	Student connectivity and accessibility to technology	RQ 1	Theme 3: Student Accessibility to technology
Accessibility		45	9/11=81.8%			
device	"P3 limited on devices at home, and I'm required to use a device to teach"	8	3/11=27.2%			
Internet	"P5 stated that Most of our students, because of our socioeconomics in this area, don't have internet access at home."	22	6/11=54.5			
Communication with admin	P7 "it would have been through small series of emails. And usually, it kind of went down chain of command."	27	10/11=90	Perceptions of communication from admin	RQ 2	Theme 4: Administrative Communication
Negative perceptions of communication		6	4/11 36.3%			
Positive Perception of communication		5	4/11 36.3%			
Video Conferences/Zoom/meeting		3	2/11 27.2			
Email as form of communication		12	10/11=90			
Expectations mentioned	P10 "expectation really was vague and kind of	18	10/11=90.1	Perceptions of expectations of admin	RQ 2	Theme 5: Administrative Expectations

Positive perception of expectation	came from just what the team leaders were told."	5	5/10=50%			
Negative perception of expectation		10	4/10=40%			
Neutral perception of expectation		3	1/10=9%			
Positive perceptions of admin efficacy	P11 stated: "I think it held us accountable more and made us more effective because we knew that they were checking to make sure that, you know, we were delivering the content, that we were available to the students, that we were communicating with our students" P8 "system was definitely doing what they could do at the time and under those circumstances."	8	4/11=36.3%	Teacher's perceptions of admin efficacy in leadership during Covid	RQ 2	Theme 6: Teacher Perceptions of Administrative Efficacy and Support:
Negative perceptions of admin efficacy		13	5/11=45.5%			
Neutral Perceptions of admin efficacy		6	2/11=18.1%			
Positive/helpful	P10 Stated "They helped me put my time and resources elsewhere, which helped me to feel like I had more time and more energy to put towards my students in the long run".	37	6/11=54.5%	Perceptions of support provided by admin	RQ 2	Theme 7: Provided Support From Administration
Negative unhelpful		13	5/11=45.5%			

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Name of interviewer: _____
Interview Date: _____ Interview Location: _____
Interview Start Time: _____ Interview Stop Time: _____
Interviewee's Name_____ Years with District_____ Grade level(s) _____ Content Area(s) _____

RQ1: What are middle school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Describe how technology was used in your classroom before the pandemic? How effectively do you think your work in utilizing this technology??
- How effective did you believe your teaching with technology was during the pandemic? Give examples.
- What challenges have you faced when using technology during remote learning?
- Describe how you implemented technology in the classroom during the pandemic. Do you think these implementations were effective in helping your students? What did you like/dislike?
- How has the experience of teaching remotely during the pandemic impacted you as a teacher? Did you believe you were effective? How has your effectiveness of a teacher changed since this experience?

RQ2: How has administrative support impacted teacher self-efficacy in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Describe the expectations your administrators had for you as a teacher using remote teaching…How were these expectations communicated? How did this communication impact your self-efficacy?
- What resources and tools did your administrators provide to assist you with remote learning? Did these tools and reported your teaching self-efficacy positively or negatively?
- Explain how your administrators assisted you when facing challenges while teaching remotely. Do you believe this assistance impacted your effectiveness in teaching? Why or Why not?
- Overall, how supportive do you feel your administrative team was in your implementation of remote learning?
- How did this support impact your perceived effectiveness in teaching remotely

AFTER the Interview

Thank you for allowing me to interview you. You will be contacted via email or phone if I need to do a follow-up interview. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions, Bandura's self-efficacy theory, and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Venkatesh (2003).

1.	Describe how technology was used in your classroom before the pandemic? How effective do you think you work in utilizing this technology? Give examples.	RQ1 teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about remote teaching	"Acceptance of technology use" Venkatesh (2003)
2.	How effective did you believe your teaching with technology was during the pandemic? Give examples.		"Impacts of teacher technology use" (Hartman et. al 2019)
3.	What challenges have you faced when using technology during remote learning?		Challenges impacting remote learning (Hodges et. al 2020)
4.	Describe how you implemented technology in the classroom during the pandemic. Do you think these implementations were effective in helping your students? What did you like/dislike?		Impacts of teacher technology use" (Hartman et. al 2019)
5.	How has the experience of teaching remotely during the pandemic impacted you as a teacher? Did you believe you were effective? How has your effectiveness of a teacher changes since this experience?		Experiences impact self-efficacy") Weibenfels et al., 2022)
6.	Describe the expectations your administrators had for you as a teacher using remote teaching…How were these expectations communicated? How	RQ2 Teacher perceptions of administrative support impact on	"Administrative supports expectations for the role of teaching while teaching

	did this communication impact your self-efficacy?	teacher self-efficacy.	remotely" (Hodges et al., 2020).
7.	What resources and tools did your administrators provide to assist you with remote learning? Did these tools and report your teaching self-efficacy positively or negatively?		"Effective professional development to support self-efficacy in technology implementation" (Cooper et al., 2020).
8.	Explain how your administrators assisted you when facing challenges while teaching remotely? Do you believe this assistance impacted your effectiveness in teaching? Why or Why not?		Administrative supports expectations for the role of teaching while teaching remotely" (Hodges et al., 2020).
9.	Overall, how supported do you feel your administrative team was in your implementation of remote learning?		"Administrative supports impact on teacher confidence" (Haverback, 2020)
10.	How did this support impact your perceived effectiveness in teaching remotely?		

Appendix D: SME Request Form and Correspondence

Hello Educational Specialist:

My name is Alexandra Wright, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I have created an interview protocol to be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts for my study. The panel will consist of three technology specialists from the schools' district technology department to ensure the interview protocol was an appropriate instrument for gathering the intended data and making edits based on any recommendations.

I am emailing you to invite you to be a part of the panel of experts in my study. Within this email, there is a consent form attached that outlines the study's procedures and protocol, the researcher's role, and the study's goal.

After receiving your consent via email by replying, "I Consent," I will notify you via email and ask that we set up a time to call and discuss the interview protocol. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email, text, or phone call if you have any questions, concerns, or comments about the study.

The title of my project is Middle School Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Administrative Support and Online Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of middle school teachers in teaching remotely during the covid-19 pandemic and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely in a Georgia school.

Appreciatively,

Alexandra Wright

My name is Alexandra Wright, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I have created an interview protocol for my study to be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts. The committee should consist of at least three subject matter specialists who have experience with educational technology and curriculum. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the interview protocol is an appropriate instrument for gathering the intended data and making edits based on any recommendations. I believe that your experience and expertise in these subjects will be beneficial to my instrument design. I invite you to be a part of the panel of experts in this study.

The title of my project is Middle School Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Administrative Support and Online Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of middle school teachers in teaching remotely during the covid-19 pandemic and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely in a Georgia school. I intend to interview middle school teachers from one school site to gain their insight into their personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Please see the attached form to review my proposed interview protocol for my qualitative study. Appreciatively,

Hello Mrs Wright,

It's good to hear from you. I pray that all is well with you and your family. I have taken the time to review your interview protocol. It's very well written to meet the goals that you have set for your research. However I would add a few questions about their perspective of being held to the same level of accountabilitycat the district and state level for student achievement and engagement while teaching digitally during COVID . Just a suggestion. Hope this helps. Have a wonderful week.

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My name is Alexandra Wright, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I have created an interview protocol for my study to be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts. The committee should consist of at least three subject matter specialists who have experience with educational technology and curriculum. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the interview protocol is an appropriate instrument for gathering the intended data and making edits based on any recommendations. I believe that your experience and expertise in these subjects will be beneficial to my instrument design. I invite you to be a part of the panel of experts in this study.

The title of my project is Middle School Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Administrative Support and Online Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of middle school teachers in teaching remotely during the covid-19 pandemic and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely in a Georgia school. I intend to interview middle school teachers from one school site to gain their insight into their personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Please see the attached form to review my proposed interview protocol for my qualitative study.
Appreciatively,

Alexandra Wright

Good Morning Alexandra,

I have read over your interview questions and the questions appear to be appropriate and aligned with your study.
The only thing that I would suggest, and it's not a big deal.
flip the order of the two questions below. I'd like to know how they implemented technology during the pandemic and then have them describe their challenges based on that implementation. Just a thought.

- What challenges have you faced when using technology during remote learning?

  Describe how you implemented technology in the classroom during the pandemic

My name is Alexandra Wright, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I have created an interview protocol for my study to be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts. The committee should consist of at least three subject matter specialists who have experience with educational technology and curriculum. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the interview protocol is an appropriate instrument for gathering the intended data and making edits based on any recommendations. I believe that your experience and expertise in these subjects will be beneficial to my instrument design. I invite you to be a part of the panel of experts in this study.

The title of my project is Middle School Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Administrative Support and Online Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of middle school teachers in teaching remotely during the covid-19 pandemic and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely in a Georgia school. I intend to interview middle school teachers from one school site to gain their insight into their personal self-efficacy beliefs in teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic

Please see the attached form to review my proposed interview protocol for my qualitative study.
Appreciatively,

This looks good. The only thing you may want to add is ask if the students who were strictly virtual were provided devices to use by the school? Did they have their own? If not, what did they do for those students? Run packets of work, etc.

•••

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Appendix E: Permission to Study Site

Partner Organization Agreement for Low-risk, Work-related Interviews

The doctoral student, Alexandra Wright is approved to collect interview data from employees/leaders at our organization.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES
I understand that, as per the student doctoral program requirements, the student will publish a scholarly report of this study in ProQuest as a doctoral capstone (withholding the names of the organization and interviewees), as per the following ethical standards:

a. In all reports (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members), the student is required to maintain confidentiality by removing names and key pieces of evidence/data that might disclose an organization's/individual's identity or inappropriately divulge proprietary details. If the organization itself wishes to publicize the findings of this project, that is the organization's judgment call.

b. The student will be responsible for complying with the organization's policies and requirements regarding data collection (including the need for the partner organization's internal ethics/regulatory approval, if applicable).

c. Via an Interview Consent Form, the student will describe to interviewees how the data will be used in the doctoral project and how all interviewees' privacy will be protected.

d. The doctoral student will not use these data for any purpose other than the doctoral study outlined in this agreement.

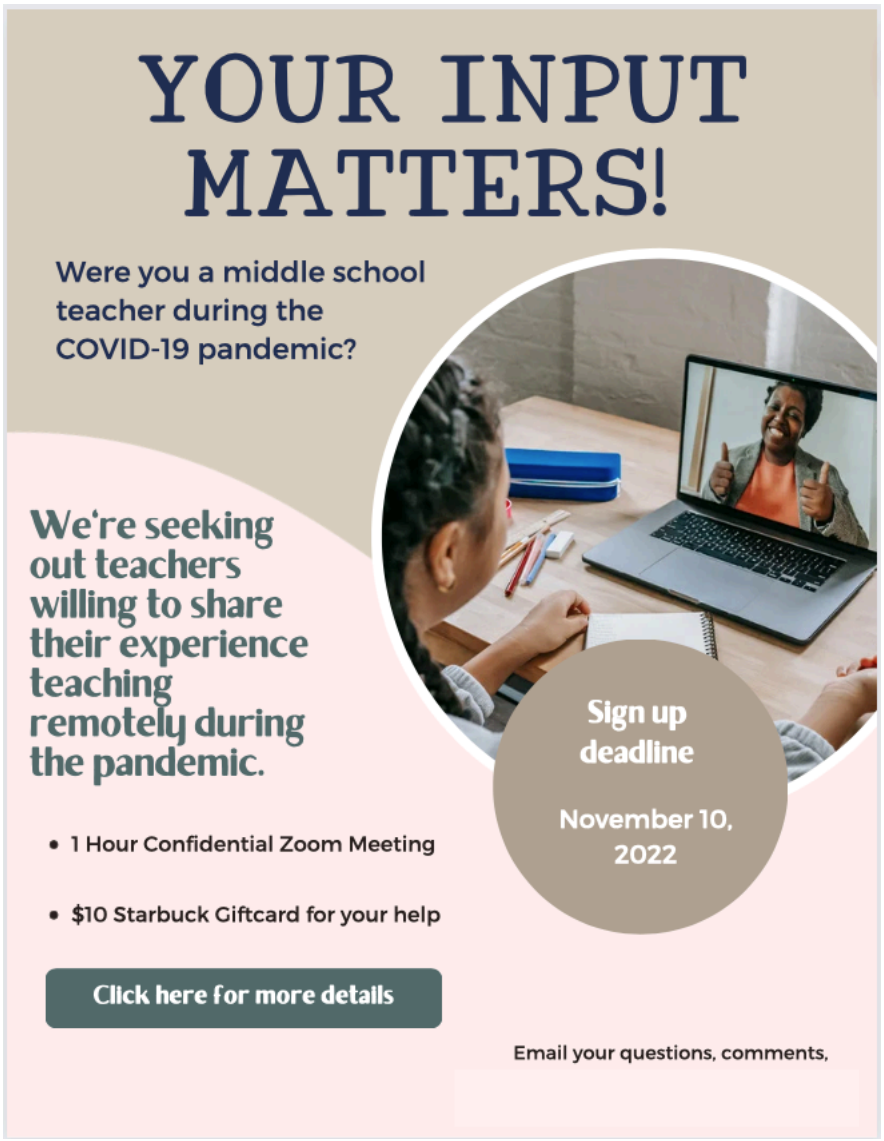
I confirm that I am authorized to approve research activities in this setting.

Signature _____

Partner Organization Leader's Name and Title

_____

Appendix F: Teacher Flyer



Appendix G: Inclusion and Exclusion Form

Dear Participant,

I appreciate your interest in participating in this study on teacher self-efficacy teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Your experience during this time is significant in understanding how school closure may have impacted teaching and learning. Before we begin an interview, I have just a few questions to ask you regarding your teaching experience.

Please know that any information you provide to this study is entirely confidential.
Your participation is entirely voluntary, and If selected for the interview process, you may choose to decline participation at any time.

Name:_____

Phone number:

Address:_____

1. Were you teaching full-time at [redacted] during the 2019-2020 school year?

   Yes No

   What was your position during this time?

   _____

2. Were you teaching full-time at [redacted] during the 2020-2021 school year?

   Yes_____ No_____

   What was your position during this time?

   _____

3. Were you responsible for conducting your classes remotely during school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

   Yes No

Thank you for your responses! I will be in contact soon to discuss scheduling an interview with you. If you should have any questions or concerns, you may email me at

Thank you,

Alexandra Wright

Appendix F: Teacher Scheduling Form

Dear Participant,

Your responses on the screening form indicate that you are eligible to continue with this research process. I want to schedule an interview and ask questions about your experience teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This interview is entirely confidential and will only last an hour. We will use the video-conferencing program Zoom to conduct this interview. To ensure a secure interview, please schedule a time that you know you can be alone and uninterrupted for the duration of the interview. A quiet location such as a home office or classroom after working hours is ideal. Please ensure sure your scheduled time is not during working hours.

You will receive a meeting code to enter the virtual meeting room upon scheduling your interview. Please do not share this code with anyone. Also, please do not share our discussion with anyone as well. As any information discussed during this interview must remain confidential. You will be recorded during the interview. This recording will only be shared with you for review. All documents regarding this interview will remain secure.

Please schedule your preferred interview time by checking the date and time.

you wish to be interviewed:

_____ Wed, November 30 _____ Tues., December 6

_____ Thurs, December 1 _____ Wed., December 7

_____ Fri, December 2 _____ Thurs., December 8

_____ Sat, December 3 _____ Fri., December 9

_____ Mon, December 5 _____ Sat., December 10

_____3:45 p.m. _____4:45 p.m. _____ 5 :45 p.m. _____6:45 p.m. _____7:45

_____9:30 Saturday's only _____10:30 Saturday's only _____11:30 Saturday's only

I will respond to you confirming our interview time.

Appendix G: Teacher Consent Form

My name is Alexandra Wright, and I am a doctoral candidate in curriculum instruction and assessment at Walden University. You are invited to participate in a research study exploring the teacher self-efficacy beliefs about teaching remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs.

I am inviting all middle school teachers at [redacted] or who taught at [redacted] during 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 (during the Covid-19 pandemic school closures) to participate in the study. This "informed consent" letter aims to inform you of the study to help you decide if you would like to participate.

Background Information:
This study aims to explore the teaching self-efficacy beliefs of middle school teachers in teaching remotely during the covid-19 pandemic and the impact administrative support may have had on these beliefs while teaching remotely in a Georgia school. This research is solely from a research perspective and is not affiliated with any particular entity.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to partake in one individual interview Using Zoom outside school hours. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The Zoom video will be recorded.
A brief follow-up phone call may be necessary to clarify any comments made during the interview.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is entirely voluntary, and your decision to participate is respected. Your participation and responses will be completely anonymous, and any information linking you to the study will not be published. If you should decide not to participate in the study at a later time, you may do so at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Any study of this nature involves some risk. The risks may include minor discomfort or fatigue due to scheduling and sitting for more than 45 minutes. However, these discomforts do not risk your safety or well-being.

At the study's conclusion, I plan to meet with the school's faculty and staff and review the research findings.
Payment:
No compensation will be provided for participating in this study.
Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Under no circumstance will any information used to identify you will be used or shared.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and understand the study well enough to decide my involvement. If you want to participate in this study, email me at "I consent".

Thank you for your time,