2-28-2025

Experiences of Teachers Who Left the Profession in Their First 5 Years

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by
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Walden University

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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February 2025

Abstract

Recent studies show that teachers are leaving the profession at a rapid rate, which is leading to a shortage in the classroom that is impacting school districts across the United States. Teachers are leaving the profession within their first 5 years of teaching as opposed to finishing their careers and retiring. Studies show that teachers leave the profession for various reasons, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of resources, student behaviors, and personal accomplishment. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to learn about the experiences of teachers who left the profession within the first 5 years of teaching from their perspectives. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was the study's theoretical framework. Data were collected through semi structured interviews with 8 teachers in the Southeast United States who left the teaching profession in their first 5 years. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted, and three themes and six subthemes were identified. Theme 1 was support and had subthemes of lack of support from administration and parent involvement; Theme 2 was training and had a subtheme of career development; and Theme 3 was burnout and had subthemes of student behaviors, workload, and COVID-19. The findings from this study may have implications for positive social change by contributing to insights that can aid school districts in knowledge to provide possible solutions to the challenges experienced by teachers in their first 5 years of teaching.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my daughter, Kennedy, who motivated and encouraged me during this educational journey. I want to thank my family for always supporting me to follow my dreams and never giving up. I want to thank all my friends who helped me study and read over my drafts and helped me develop a different perspective. I want to thank all the faculty and staff at Walden University for providing resources that prepared me for this new journey ahead.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my chair and co-chair, Dr. JoAnn McAllister and Dr. Melody Moore for working tirelessly to encourage me to complete this journey. The patience and guidance that I received allowed me to complete my Ph. D and not lose sight of my goals. The knowledge they provided motivated me to start thinking more strategically about the research that I was conducting. I also would like to thank Walden University for facilitating residencies for collaboration and providing an extensive training on research methods.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Across the United States, teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, causing a shortage in school districts (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Rural areas in southern states, especially, are experiencing a greater disadvantage due to the limited pool of teachers available, which makes it difficult to keep qualified teachers in the classroom (Miller et al., 2019). The loss of teachers created multiple consequences for school districts, which included an increase in expenses, student learning, and the future of the education system (Nguyen, 2020). Understanding why teachers left their careers early was an important topic for multiple stakeholders, especially in rural areas of the Southeast United States where attrition rates were highest (Miller et al., 2019).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of teachers and any challenges they faced while in a Southeast school district to increase understanding about the reasons that led to their departure within the first 5 years. This study provided insights to school districts on challenges that teachers faced and possible solutions. The strategies was used to reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession and contribute to social change by offering insights to aid in creating more stable school experiences for teachers and students (see Bagnall & Skipper, 2020).

This chapter describes the background of why teachers are leaving the profession and contributing factors based on previous research and why this is a problem. The chapter also includes the purpose statement, which explains why this study is needed and the research question being addressed. The theoretical framework, Maslow's hierarchy of

needs, which was used to provide insight into the mindset of the participants, is discussed. Finally, the purpose of this study, research design, assumptions, significance, and scope and limitations are also described.

Background

Across the United States, there is a growing concern about teacher shortages (Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018). Teachers leaving the profession creates problems for communities by making it difficult for school districts to retain highly qualified teachers; therefore, this study provided data on the reasons behind teachers leaving the classroom (Raab, 2018; Solomonson et al., 2019; TNTP, 2021; With, 2017). Based on the findings of Rankin (2017), the attrition for teachers was 26.5% per year, with recent studies confirming an increase in this rate as the years go by (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2021). Previous studies focused on the statistics related to teachers leaving the profession, for example, the cost of teacher attrition to school districts, teacher salaries, and working conditions.

The cost of teacher attrition is increasing rapidly in many school districts, which creates a strain for school districts to maintain quality teachers (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020). The average cost of teacher attrition is $50,000 each time a teacher decides to leave the profession, which limits the number of resources available for teachers who remain in the profession (Ramos, 2020). The overall cost of teachers leaving after 5 years is $1 billion each year, which makes it important to keep teachers in rural communities (Ramos, 2020).

There are numerous reasons that teachers leave the profession. Garcia and Weiss (2019) found that teachers leave at a rate of 13.8% due to a lack of training to handle the challenges in the classroom. School districts with an increase in enrollment tend to experience higher turnovers due to teachers' expectation of higher salaries, according to Xuehui (2018). The demographic of the teacher can also serve as a predictor of teachers leaving the profession (Smith, 2020). Xuehui (2019) found that teachers from urban communities have higher salaries than teachers in rural communities, which creates a significant gap. In this situation, teachers start to leave the profession for other career opportunities where the pay is more equivalent to the workload (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020).

Teachers report leaving rural communities for jobs with higher salaries, better work conditions, a more diverse student population, additional training, and better support from the administration, according to Garcia and Weiss (2019). Schools in rural communities often lack desirability for teachers due to high levels of poverty, student behaviors, fewer job opportunities, burnout, and the constant feeling of isolation (Miller et al., 2019). Elyashiv (2019) provided details about the contributing factors that lead to teachers leaving the field, such as salaries, better career opportunities, and fewer student behaviors. Sibiya et al. (2019) suggested that teachers in rural communities have difficulty managing classroom behaviors due to the structure of the family in poverty areas and indicated a heightened need to control student behaviors by finding ways to keep students engaged.

Hasselquist and Graves (2020) revealed that teachers earning less than $40,000 a year have a higher turnover rate within the first year due to their experiences in the classroom. Avalos and Valenzuela (2016) explained that younger teachers seek employment in areas where they will receive better pay to compensate for the workload they are experiencing. Avalos and Valenzuela (2016) found that new teachers, within the first 2 years of teaching, expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with work conditions and a lack of consistency with job duties. In addition, Kim (2019) noted the concerns of teachers due to the "impact of heavy workloads and low rewards on teacher retention" (p. 1). Heavy workloads and low wages appear to be common concerns among teachers in rural communities in the Southeast.

Oftentimes studies correlate teachers leaving with age, race, socioeconomic status, and tenure (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020). These studies provide a clear picture of the problem of teacher attrition but leave many unanswered questions by focusing on teachers and their desire to receive higher pay (Kim, 2019; Raab, 2018). Additionally, most previous studies used a quantitative approach to collect and analyze data on specific groups without including the perspectives of teachers. While these studies reveal some of the challenges in rural classrooms that lead to teachers leaving the profession over time, they do not include the perspectives of teachers. Knowing about these various challenges from the perspectives of teachers provided some insight into the reasons these teachers leave the profession early in their careers and suggest strategies to stem their early departure.

Problem Statement

Day-to-day challenges that teachers experience contributed to their leaving the teaching profession early in their careers just as the broader issues of pay, workload, tenure, and student behavior described in studies above (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Kim, 2019; Xuehui, 2018). However, little or no research has included asking teachers about specific challenges, such as requirements for coursework development, the structure of the classroom, and the support for teachers (Mitani et al., 2022). For example, when it comes to specific reasons, studies such as that conducted by Pivovarova and Powers (2022) do not focus on the reasons teachers choose to leave, only the fact that they appear to possess less experience than teachers from other schools. The lack of understanding of the experiences of teachers that contributed to their departure leaves school administrators with additional questions as to why some teachers stay and some teachers leave (Pivovarova & Powers, 2022).

Garcia and Weiss (2019) asserted that school districts struggle to prevent teachers from leaving due to their lack of understanding when it comes to the challenges teachers are facing. Thus, school districts are unable to develop strategies and programs to prevent teachers from leaving the profession early and, potentially, prevent a teacher shortage. This study was conducted to explore reasons teachers leave the profession early in their careers with a focus on their day-to-day experiences in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences and challenges of teachers who left the profession within their first 5 years of teaching in a

rural school district in a Southeastern state. Reasons cited by teachers in previous studies have included lack of personal achievement, high workloads, student behaviors, and lack of support from the administration (Engin, 2020; Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018). Through this study, teachers were able to describe day-to-day experiences that included requirements for coursework development, classroom structure, and teacher support, which was related to their early departure from the profession. This study provided a deeper understanding of the classroom experiences described by teachers as contributing factors to leaving the profession and enable school administrators to develop strategies to provide more support to teachers in the early years of their teaching careers.

Research Question

Through a generic qualitative research design, this study answered the following research question: What day-to-day experiences in the classroom do teachers describe related to their departure from the profession in the first 5 years?

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the experiences and challenges of teachers that have led them to leave the profession within their first 5 years. Qualitative studies are important when providing firsthand accounts of a phenomenon or experience. Previous studies focused on teachers leaving the profession from a quantitative perspective. For example, a quantitative study conducted by Warsame and Valles (2018) used a mixed method to study novice teachers who left the profession after their first year of teaching. Lindqvist et al. (2014) used a longitudinal study to examine educators who left the profession within the first 5 years.

In contrast, this qualitative study provided information from the experiences of teachers within the classroom. Patton (1990) explained that qualitative research focuses on the specific experiences of an individual to explain a phenomenon through the eyes of a researcher. Qualitative studies can provide details into the direct experiences of the participants to explain the education system (Weddle et al., 2021). Through the lens of qualitative research, a researcher can learn from focus groups to understand the experiences of teachers (Weddle et al., 2021). Weddle et al. (2021) used interviews to understand the experiences of teachers over time to assess how their attitudes changed about their environment.

The specific method selected for this study was a generic qualitative approach to explore the experiences of teachers to better understand why they leave the profession. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) referred to generic qualitative approaches as a means to understand the experiences of people and how those experiences are explained to make sense of a phenomenon through thematic analysis (Kahlke, 2014; Steiner, 2017). Using a generic qualitative approach, this study was conducted to explore the experiences of teachers who have chosen to leave the profession due to their experiences in the classroom.

Researchers using a generic qualitative approach may choose not to guide their study with a methodology or they can choose to utilize multiple methodologies to better understand a phenomenon (Caelli et al., 2003). To understand a phenomenon, Kahlke (2014) asserted that a researcher can avoid bias by focusing on the data provided by the participants via semi structured interviews and focus group sessions to avoid any conflict

of interest and reduce any false data being provided. Another way to avoid bias is by being transparent and honest with participants about the data being collected (Shaw, 2016). A researcher must explain that honesty and integrity are necessary when it comes to answering interview questions. The researcher is expected to be honest about any errors to avoid any implications of bias (Shaw, 2016). By following these guidelines, the researcher will avoid influencing the data by inserting their own opinion about the study.

The participants in this study included teachers who left the profession within 5 years. Social media groups that include teachers were used to locate participants for this study. The data collection occurred through semi structured interviews. The participants were asked open-ended questions to elicit details about their experiences in the classroom. Data gathered through interviews with teachers were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Casey et al. (2021) explained how to use thematic analysis as a method to understand the experiences of groups that are often underrepresented. Events are often filtered through the lens of the participant based on their interpretation (Casey et al., 2021). Casey et al. (2021) explained the process as a series of steps: becoming familiar with the information being gathered, coding that information, creating themes based on the information gathered, reviewing the themes based on the participants, and then labeling the themes. He et al. (2015) recommended constant comparison, which is analyzing the data concurrently to identify the common themes among the data and similarities among the participants when it comes to their responses. Codes are created to

identify patterns leading to the identification of themes to better understand the data (Kahlke, 2014).

Definitions

Beginning teachers: Teachers who recently completed training and have their first classroom of students (Stahnke & Biomeke, 2021).

Early career teachers: Teachers within their first 5 years of teaching (Stahnke & Biomeke, 2021).

New teachers: Teachers who are in their first year of teaching (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016).

Novice teachers: Teachers who are new in the field and have very little experience (Stahnke & Biomeke, 2021).

Professional development: The desire to enhance professional skills by additional training or learning new skills to advance a career (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016).

Rural communities: Communities that tend to consist of small groups of people and very few businesses (National Geographic, 2021).

Self-efficacy: The belief held by an individual in their ability to reach the desired goal by organizing and executing plans (Sokmen & Kilic, 2019).

Teacher attrition: Teachers leaving the profession or choosing to change their careers. The driving forces of teacher attrition are salary, level of education, marital status, increasing experience, and beginning teachers (Croasmun et al., 2006).

Teacher burnout: Stress that impacts teachers emotionally and physically (Tapp, n.d.).

Teacher retention: The ability to retain teachers from year to year (Freedman & Warshauer, 2008).

Teacher turnover: Teachers leaving the classroom at rapid rates due to contributing factors (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017).

Teacher well-being: The need or ability of a teacher to focus on feelings and emotions to create a positive environment in the classroom (Van der Vyver, 2020).

Assumptions

Research is often based on assumptions or philosophical principles that guide the process (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is based on ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions. The ontological assumption refers to the idea that participants' views of reality are social constructions and are subjective (Creswell, 2013). This study is based on the ontological assumption that the perspectives of the participants will differ because they are explaining the phenomenon from different viewpoints (Creswell, 2013). This was relevant during this study because each teacher shared a different perspective about their time in the classroom. Karagiozia (2018) explained how epistemological assumptions are based on an awareness that the knowledge an individual considers normal is shaped by their own experiences. Creswell (2014) also explained that understanding epistemological assumptions provides an opportunity for a researcher to be more involved in the research. However, during this study, it was important for me to avoid becoming overly involved in the data to prevent influencing the participants.

Axiological assumptions are related to individuals' values, and Creswell (2014) noted the importance of focusing on potential biases of a personal nature. In this study, any bias based on my perspective on education, would influence my perspective on what is considered a challenge in the classroom and what teachers should be able to handle in the classroom. Axiological assumptions depend on the values of individuals and may promote social change (Creswell, 2014). Methodological assumptions, according to

Creswell (2014), are the process of shaping factors simultaneously by merging contexts. Caelli et al. (2003) explained that generic qualitative research can be evaluated from epistemological or methodological positions and that each level must be understood with consistent terms. A researcher should go back to the participants to clarify their understanding and validate any findings during the study (Caelli et al., 2003).

This study is also based on the following practical assumptions: (a) schools in rural districts have fewer resources for teachers to manage the challenges of the classroom, (b) teachers leave the profession because of their experiences, and (c) the administration played a role in teachers' decision to leave the profession. These assumptions were necessary for this study to determine if those reasons play any part in a teacher's decision to leave the profession. Another important reason for the assumptions listed is to determine if there are real differences in resources being made available to teachers in certain school districts and whether those differences are enough to lead to early departure.

Scope and Delimitations

The specific focus of this study was the experiences of teachers within their first 5 years. The experiences that teachers share provided details about the challenges that led to their departure from the profession. This specific focus provided a better understanding of the problems that resulted in teachers leaving and what contributes to their decision to either change careers or leave the profession altogether. The scope of this study also includes attention to insights that help teachers navigate the challenges they experience within the classroom.

The sample consisted of teachers who spent 1 to 5 years in the profession. This study did not include teachers who have spent over 5 years in the field or those who are still in the field. This study did not include teachers who left the profession due to disciplinary concerns but did include teachers who decided to leave for various reasons that were more difficult to manage. The delimitation of this study is that not all teachers who are in rural school districts will face challenges within the classroom and choose to leave the profession.

According to Emery et al. (2018), information about teachers is transferable in educational settings when evidence is present to demonstrate the implementation of best practices and evaluations that provided support for teachers in the field. Teachers are similar to many other professions where they experience difficulties that ultimately result in their departure. Ferrando et al. (2019) described transferability as a process with three phases. The first phase of transferability was to complete research that uncovered existing data and analyze the current condition of those data (Ferrando et al., 2019). The second

phase of the process involved gathering data from experts in the field and determining what is needed to further the research (Ferrando et al., 2019). The final phase of transferability involved validating the results gathered (Ferrando et al., 2019).

To ensure transferability, Patton (2015) explained that the two contexts share similarities. Patton (2015) explained transferability as the harmony that involves sending and receiving context that controls the internal validity. The procedure of transferability, as explained by Patton (2015), suggests that generalizations are made based on the context and how that information applies to scientific criteria. Patton (2015) described transferability as a process where participants can relate to certain feelings and attitudes as if they experienced those things personally.

Limitations

Bellamy et al. (2016) analyzed the limitations of generic qualitative research as a method that mainly focuses on the feelings of the participants instead of bringing awareness to the phenomenon as a whole. By using a generic qualitative approach, a researcher can potentially encounter challenges to the validity and credibility of the study based on the different perspectives (Bellamy et al., 2016). Many other approaches provided answers based on the research question; however, with a generic approach, the results relied on the responses from the participants (Bellamy et al., 2016).

This study had limitations to recruiting teachers to participate in the research and provide information on their experiences in the classroom. One of the main challenges to this study was gaining access to participants who fit the criteria of leaving the profession

within the first 5 years. Finding a diverse group of participants willing to participate in the study was a challenge for this study as well.

One of the priorities of this study is to control any biases that come from me as the researcher. Before conducting the interviews, I needed to assess my reasons for studying teachers and why they are leaving the profession (see Bellamy et al., 2016). Creswell (2013) asserted that researchers' perspectives on the subject prevent the research from acknowledging the experiences of the participants. Participant bias is another concern for this study. Participants answer questions based on what they think a researcher wants to hear or based on hearsay. Another challenge was to control any biases that I may have about teachers leaving the profession. Judging teachers who decided to leave the profession is another bias that needed to be addressed. Another challenge to address was removing any assumptions about why teachers left the profession.

Creswell (2013) noted that participants often fear what their community will think once they hear about their experiences. The fear of shame from their community contributed to some participants being reluctant about participating in the study (see Creswell, 2013). Participants need to provide information based on their experiences and not the experiences of other teachers or information that may be popular among the community.

One barrier during this study was to create a safe place for teachers to speak freely without fear of retaliation (see Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018). To protect the identity of the participants, each name was replaced with a code. Protecting the names of the

participants encourages open dialogue about their experiences and creates a space of transparency.

Significance

In rural communities, new teachers leave between 19% to 74% of the time before making it to 5 years in the profession (Torres, 2020). Findings by Torres (2020) assert that teachers who leave within the first 5 years of teaching tend to become less productive in the classroom, which impacts students' ability to learn. This study advances the knowledge in the discipline by providing a detailed account of the experiences of teachers and what led to their departure from the profession. This study provided information regarding the contributing factors that led to teachers switching professions or leaving certain school districts. Torres (2020) noted that school districts with underserved students have fewer resources, which tends to exacerbate teachers' reasons for wanting to leave the profession. This study provided insight into reasons teachers require more support in the classroom from their administration and the benefits of additional support. The study provided details as to why teachers need policies that support additional training for teachers to manage the challenges they face within the classroom and policies that protect teachers' experiences in the classroom and provide resources to deal with the challenges faced within the classroom.

The findings of this study promoted positive social change by contributing to an understanding of the experiences of teachers and their reasons for leaving the profession. By understanding the reasons that teachers have chosen to leave the profession, school districts can develop professional programs for teachers to deal with the challenges they

experience in the classroom and the benefits of learning to defuse student behaviors. The implications for positive social change encouraged school districts to develop more resources to prevent teachers from leaving the profession when they experience challenges with students and parents. This study provided information on why additional training for teachers is needed and how this align with career development and allow teachers to advance their pay. The purpose of this study is to alleviate the problem identified by Elyashiv (2019) with teachers leaving the classroom and the difficulty in retaining highly qualified teachers in school districts with fewer resources.

Summary

The social problem addressed by this study deals with teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years due to challenges experienced in the classroom. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the day-to-day experiences of teachers that influenced their decision to leave the profession. As teachers leave the profession for jobs with better pay, work conditions, career development, and support; fewer student behaviors; and improved work-life balance, many school districts continue to experience teacher attrition. The theoretical framework for this study, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, provided an understanding of teachers' experiences by looking at how their needs are being met by their work. The study used a generic qualitative approach to understand the experiences of teachers and how those experiences contributed to their decision to leave the profession within the first 5 years.

In Chapter 2, the strategy for identifying relevant research related to the topic was described and the theoretical framework discussed. The review of the literature focused

on essential topics, including teacher attrition, teachers' reasons for leaving, and teacher coping strategies, which are essential in understanding the problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Teachers are leaving the profession at higher rates due to experiences (*Education Journal*, 2016; He, 2015). Solomonson et al., (2019) found that 41% of teachers leave before they complete their first 5 years, citing unrealistic expectations and a lack of time for a personal life as the main reasons cited by educators. The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the lived experiences of teachers and why they chose to leave within their first 5 years of teaching. Using a questionnaire, Robison and Russell (2021) found that 12% of its 155 participants planned to leave the profession within 5 years. Reasons cited for leaving the profession were excessive workload, lack of recognition for accomplishments, and lack of autonomy for making decisions (Robison & Russell, 2021). A narrative inquiry conducted by Raab (2018) revealed teachers' experiences in public school districts that led to leaving the profession, such as low wages, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of career opportunities. This study contributes another perspective from the point of view of the teachers explaining the specific challenges they experienced in public school districts and what lead to their departure from the profession.

The chapter begins with the literature search strategy, including the terms used to search multiple databases for current peer-reviewed articles related to the topic of teacher attrition leading to teacher shortages. In the theoretical framework section, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is discussed, how it relates to teachers' motivation, and how it has influenced this study's design. The literature review section reviewed the previous research related to topics associated with teacher attrition.

Literature Search Strategy

The data collected provided insights into teachers leaving the profession and their experiences by researching multiple scholarly sources. The library databases that were used are Ebscohost, PsycNet, ERIC, PsycInfo, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. Yahoo and Google were used as search engines to find additional articles which included statistics and studies conducted by school districts. The keywords searched included *teachers leaving, beginner teachers, novice teachers, burnout, selfefficacy, rural communities, resources, professional development, the well-being of teachers, race theory, pay increase for teachers, teacher attrition, teacher retention,* and *teacher turnover*. Additional keywords that were used included *Maslow's hierarchy of needs, teacher coping strategies, education level of teachers who leave the profession, minority teachers in rural school districts,* and *teachers new to the profession*. In addition to keywords, research especially about teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years of teaching was gathered.

Ebscohost was used to search for the reasons teachers left the profession. Ebscohost searches provided details about teachers who left for more money, better work conditions, job security, controlled student behaviors, and more supporting administration. Articles about teacher attrition and teacher retention were also found through Ebscohost. Google Scholar was used to find articles about teachers in certain geographic areas and how those areas contributed to their decision to leave the profession. Several of the sources did not include information about specific geographic areas; in this instance, additional information was gathered by searching for data using

the keywords of that demographic area. When searching for articles that included data from school districts in the Southeast United States, the information was limited; however, when the search started with school districts with limited resources, more information started to populate.

Another search was completed to understand the reasons teachers left certain communities. The search strategy included narrowing down the teachers who left the profession within certain geographic locations. This type of search is important, especially, to understand if there are differences based on locations, which included both qualitative and quantitative studies. The research included studies that previously measured teachers leaving the profession for various reasons. Some of the studies included databases where teachers were surveyed while other studies included case studies. Google Scholar included studies from other universities where teachers provided information on their reasons for leaving the profession. Each of the search engines contributed by adding vital information to the study from different resources.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs explored the growth of an individual based on observations about their fulfillment of specific needs. The individual, according to Maslow, must balance the needs of society with their own needs in order to develop motivation. Maslow (1943) emphasizes that the individual must obtain each need before being able to move on to the next need. Maslow's hierarchy of needs focuses on the wellbeing of the individual and how each need is relevant to motivate the individual. Maslow

(1943) explained the hierarchy of needs as a means to support understanding the components of job satisfaction, which outlines the needs of the individual to be recognized for their contributions, have control of their environment, and receive rewards for a job well done.

Maslow (1943) explained that the first need is physiological, which reflects the need for survival. This need is crucial due to the inability to function without necessities. Teachers need to fulfill their basic physiological needs before they can focus on providing support to their students. As the physiological need is met, the next need is for safety. Teachers desire to feel safe in their environment, which focuses on providing order and stability in their life (Maslow, 1943). This is the stage in which an individual seeks out security through employment or their family. The third stage is love and belonging, which refers to individuals' ability to fulfill their previous needs and find a sense of belonging. Teachers desire to experience a sense of belonging within their school district by having autonomy over decisions made within the classroom. Individuals seek connections with others to fulfill their needs (Maslow, 1943). The fourth stage is esteem, which is how the individual views their self-worth and how they are viewed by others. Teachers need to feel validated by their peers and the administration when it comes to their work. The final need is self-actualization in which the individual starts to realize their worth and potential (Maslow, 1943). During this stage, teachers have started to realize their value and often seek promotions for higher salaries.

Hale et al. (2019) used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain that as teachers achieve their goals, they will no longer feel isolated, which enables them to fulfill their

psychological needs. Teachers are encouraged to take care of their basic needs before they can seek out personal accomplishment, which is the highest level of the hierarchy of needs. Groff-Paris (2010) explained that teachers seek to fulfill their psychological needs by gaining control over their work environment and being empowered to make decisions. Hale et al. (2019) described self-actualization as the highest level of accomplishment for a teacher, which means the individual understands their capabilities. Groff-Paris (2010) explained that unmet needs can lead to burnout and dissatisfaction. As burnout starts to increase, teachers began to lose trust in their administration and the quality of their work starts to diminish (Groff-Paris, 2010).

This theory explained how each level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs must be fulfilled for teachers to become motivated and accomplish their goals. This hierarchy of needs influenced the choice of the generic qualitative approach supporting a focus on teacher attrition and the experiences that led to teachers leaving the profession. The theory also shaped the research question about how those experiences influenced teachers' decisions to leave the classroom. The questions also addressed whether the lack of motivation influenced their reason for leaving.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

This section of Chapter 2 discusses the various concepts related to the problem of teachers leaving the profession early in their careers. This study used a generic qualitative approach to understand the day-to-day experiences in the classroom. Previous studies have discussed statistics from groups of teachers who have left the field; however, there is limited data on teachers' lived experiences. The concepts chosen are based on studies

that express several possible reasons for teachers leaving the classroom. The topics reviewed include teacher attrition, the impact of teacher attrition on school districts, why teachers leave, demographics of teachers, career opportunities, lack of resources, teacher burnout, coping strategies, lack of resources, career opportunities, teacher burnout, and teaching style. In prior studies, teachers have described several reasons that contribute to their departure from the field; however, there is limited data on their experiences within the classroom to determine if those experiences were the only factors that led to their decision.

Teacher Attrition

Attrition is the leading cause of teacher shortages in rural communities (BardoviHarlig & Burghardt, 2020). The decline of educators in the classroom is leading to shortages in school districts where resources are limited (Bardovi-Harlig & Burghardt, 2020). The Southeast Region Department of Education (2011) reported that school districts in rural communities are losing teachers due to a lack of evenly distributed resources to retain highly qualified teachers. Teachers are evaluated and compensated based on practices that are beneficial to the district instead of practices that model a program for the development of teachers (Southeast Region Department of Education, 2011). For many teachers, attrition represents the decrease in interest in their profession due to the constant challenges they are facing (Bardovi-Harlig & Burghardt, 2020). As mentioned by Torres (2020), an average of 19% to 74% of new teachers choose to separate from the profession within their first 5 years.

Teacher attrition is reducing the number of teachers available to teach in the classroom, which is causing a teacher shortage in rural communities (Education Journal, 2016; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; He, 2015; Miller et al., 2019). Teacher attrition is impacting school districts due to districts finding it difficult to find qualifying teachers to join districts with fewer resources (Rankin, 2017; Southeast Region Department of Education, 2011). Teachers are leaving the classroom due to the increased workloads and difficulties managing the challenges in the classroom (Rankin, 2017; Smalley et al., 2019).

Teachers in underserved school districts with low-income families and minorities tend to have the highest attrition rates (Torres, 2020). Torres (2020) explained that attrition is higher in underserved communities due to work conditions being poor, fewer salaries, the absence of students, and problems with behaviors. Cancio et al. (2014) and Rankin (2017) mentioned that teachers are leaving the profession due to inadequate resources for materials and services needed in the classroom.

Hasselquist and Graves (2020) asserted that teachers leave the profession when there is a lack of support from the administration. Teachers desire to feel worthy in their positions. Clark et al. (2014) found that veteran teachers rely on a strong support system from their administration. Teachers with a strong connection with the administration are twice as likely to remain in the profession (Clark et al., 2014). On the other hand, teachers early in their careers remain in the classroom when a strong administrative presence is encouraged. Hasselquist and Graves (2020) explained that teachers who lack a strong administrative presence left the profession at any given time.

As mentioned by Ramos (2020), school districts are attempting to increase the size of classrooms to compensate for the lack of teachers. Many of the vacancies are filled with teachers who are less qualified and are not properly trained to manage larger classroom sizes (Ramos, 2020). Due to the constant shortage of teachers, policies are being adjusted to reduce the qualifications needed for teaching positions (Ramos, 2020). As school districts attempt to navigate the shortage of teachers, many schools experienced a decrease in elective subjects (Ramos, 2020). Hester et al. (2020) explained that school districts experienced a shortage in their special education classes as teachers continue to leave the profession.

Why Teachers Leave

Smalley et al. (2019) explained that teachers leave the profession due to the challenges they experience when managing the classroom and planning their lessons for the students. Several teacher demographics served as a predictor of teachers leaving the profession early (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Tuan, 2020; Yingna et al., 2016), such as education level, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, culture, desired income, age, and previous job history. Teachers are seeking career opportunities to increase professional development (Fisher, 2016; Hammond, 2017; Yasar & Demir, 2015). Teachers experience burnout over time due to the increase in stress and pressure they experience in the classroom (Rankin, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019). Teachers have mentioned a lack of resources as a reason for leaving the profession (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019; Wiltz, 2020).

As teachers attempt to manage their classrooms, they often struggle to develop their curriculum which created additional stress for educators (Smalley et al., 2019). As part of the growing concern for teachers to manage the challenges they face in the classroom, many teachers struggle with the challenge of staffing issues which brings along more job duties in classrooms that are overcrowded.

Overcrowded classrooms are more difficult when student behaviors are a challenge for teachers. The impact of student behavior was linked to teachers leaving the profession due to the lack of support when trying to control their classroom (Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018). Stiglbauer and Zuber (2018) reported that teacher stress correlates with the stress students face in the classroom. The stress in the classroom caused a strain on the relationship between the teacher and the student. When students are unable to establish a relationship with their teacher, this impacted the student academically. Garcia and Weiss (2019) explained that the shortage of teachers can interfere with the way students learn new information. Students in the presence of teachers who experienced stress, often had trouble learning the most basic skills needed for school (Stiglbauer & Zuber, 2018).

As teachers contemplate leaving the classroom, their experiences with overcrowded classrooms tend to exasperate their feelings for wanting to leave. Larger classroom sizes are often the result of high attrition among teachers (Ramos, 2020). Novice teachers are twice as likely to leave the classroom due to a lack of control over the students when the classroom is too large (Ramos, 2020). Fisher (2016) explained that student behaviors impacted their decision to leave the profession. Matsepe et al. (2019)

reported that teachers in larger classrooms tend to have trouble keeping students engaged and teaching students how to become critical thinkers.

Along with the added pressure of creating a curriculum, Smalley et al. (2019) reported that the biggest reason that teachers leave the classroom is due to the added pressure of managing finances and paperwork which is required in their day-to-day activities. Igo and Perry (2019) mentioned that teachers have difficulty managing their time to keep up with the growing demand for work conditions when there was a shortage of teachers. Teachers are expected to manage the classroom while handling other responsibilities they are given (Igo & Perry, 2019). As teachers learned how to navigate their responsibilities within the classroom, they are often met with challenges from their families as they try to maintain a work-life balance (Smalley et al., 2019).

As described by Smalley et al., (2019) factors that contributed to teachers leaving the profession include pressure from their families to spend more time at home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers began working remotely which impacted their relationships with their families (Rosenberg, 2021). Teachers often felt guilty about the additional time they spent at work trying to ensure that their students had everything needed within the classroom (Smalley et al., 2019). Teachers spent hours outside of their work schedule trying to create the curriculum needed in the classroom which interfered with the time they can spent with their families (Smalley et al., 2019). Teachers were constantly under pressure to perform at a high level to advance in their careers. The increased pressure to constantly perform at a high level caused many teachers to sacrifice the time they spent with their families in order to be successful in the classroom

(Rosenberg, 2021). Although the pandemic gave many teachers time back with their families, this became a reason that so many teachers did not return to the classroom (Rosenberg, 2021).

COVID-19 impacted teachers in many ways when it came to their level of commitment in the classroom (Rosenberg, 2021). The desire for more stability within the school districts increased during the pandemic which impacted teachers and students (Gunn, 2023). School districts struggled to find time for teachers to develop their curriculum and collaborate with other teachers (Rosenberg, 2021). Okagbue et al. (2023) explained that during the pandemic teachers found it difficult to manage digital learning with a lack of training. Teachers expressed concerns with the progressive nature of virtual learning in which they felt prepared to teach their students (Okagbue et al., 2023).

As teachers tried to advance their careers for better-paying positions, they expressed concern about dissatisfaction with their careers which often impacted their decision to leave the profession (Smalley et al., 2019). Teachers found themselves becoming stagnant within the classroom without much room for growth or career development. Teachers were not given opportunities to improve their skills or learn new techniques within the classroom unless they sought higher education (Rankin, 2017).

While previous studies showed that salaries can influence teachers' decision to leave the profession other factors such as burdens of the occupation and unrealistic expectations play a role in the (Igo & Perry, 2019). Hasselquist and Graves (2020) mentioned that one reason that teachers leave the profession is their salary, which has decreased the number of teachers available in certain districts. Schools located in rural

communities had difficulties recruiting high-quality teachers which placed more pressure on the teachers currently within the school district (Kim and Buric, 2020).

According to Jacobson et al. (2020), new teachers encountered challenges in the classroom, whereas they left the profession at a rate of 20% to 44% of the time. Jacobson et al. (2020) noted that teachers who experienced challenges, such as not receiving enough support from the administration and stress due to being undertrained, had a higher tendency to leave the profession (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Teachers noted a lack of resources for managing the discipline problems they experienced with overcrowded classrooms (Matsepe et al., 2019). Matsepe et al. (2019) asserted that teachers spent the majority of their time dealing with behavioral issues of students such as bullying and teasing other students. The long-term effects of overcrowded classrooms caused teachers to experience more stress and a lack of morale (Matsepe et al., 2019). As noted by Anthony and Kritsonis (2007) teachers who experienced classrooms being too crowded left the profession after 5 years of teaching at a rate of 50%.

Teachers often left when disciplinary actions seemed unfair and the administration does not treat students in a caring manner (Cancio et al., 2014). Previous studies conducted by Ramos (2020) explained the impact of teachers leaving without warning and the issue experienced by school districts having to find qualified teachers during a short period. With the cost of teacher attrition increasing annually, Ramos (2020) estimated that nationally over 8 billion dollars were lost due to teacher shortages in school districts.

Demographic Considerations in Teachers Leaving the Profession Early

More recent studies established that the demographics of the teacher played a critical role in their decision to leave the profession. Pivovarova and Powers (2022) focused on teachers leaving the profession based on employment data collected about teachers. Their data compared teachers leaving charter schools and traditional public schools by their characteristics and determined that less experienced teachers tend to leave more quickly than teachers with more experience (Pivovarova & Powers, 2022).

Minority groups received less support from the administration when compared to their peers from other backgrounds (Whitfield, 2018). As noted by Whitfield (2018), African Americans reported a lack of satisfaction with their jobs and often feared their job would be in jeopardy. Teachers reported experiences of bias when it came to decision-making that impacted minorities (Whitfield, 2018). The consequences of African American teachers leaving the profession left minority students with a lack of representation in their classrooms (Whitfield, 2018). African American teachers experienced isolation from other teachers and were overlooked for promotions (Whitfield, 2018). The classrooms are in greater need of diversity and the environment is tough for teachers to maintain. The disadvantage that students of color experienced had adverse effects in the classroom which caused many of the students to struggle behind other students (Gershenson et al., 2017). Tuan (2020) found that White teachers left the profession more frequently than racial minority teachers left the profession, in most districts when the challenges are difficult to handle.

Although demographics played a critical role in teachers leaving the profession, Smith (2020) found that teachers who are new and young tend to leave the profession more rapidly in comparison to more experienced teachers for better job opportunities.

New teachers left close to 30% of the time, which made it important for school districts to uncover the experiences of teachers to prevent teachers from leaving the profession, according to Rankin (2017). Karsenti and Collin (2013) examined the aspect of school districts searching for more novice teachers as opposed to new teachers who are twice as likely to leave the profession early.

Demographics such as race and age impacted their decision to leave the profession, the skillset of the teacher determined whether they were successful in the classroom. Tuan (2020) referred to teachers leaving the profession as dropouts, who left the profession early on due to their inability to survive in the classroom. Based on the findings of Tuan (2020), teachers left the profession as they experienced an increase in challenges within the classroom that stemmed from student behaviors, conflict with parents, and lack of support from the administration. Teachers who lacked the necessary skills to be effective, often left the profession to find more desirable career opportunities (Tuan, 2020).

Recent studies suggested that the education level of the teacher played a role in their decision to leave or to stay in the profession. Tuan (2020) proposed that teachers with higher education such as degrees and certifications tended to leave the profession within the first couple of months or weeks of being in the classroom due to their experiences. Yingna et al. (2016) explained that teachers without graduate-level

experience tended to lack the skills to manage the challenges in the classroom. Garcia and Weiss (2019) reported that from 2015 to 2016 that the number of teachers completing their degree dropped to 27.4% based on the majority of the school districts not hiring.

Tuan (2020) explained that teachers in rural communities often have less education and are twice as likely to leave the profession when compared to teachers in suburban areas.

Career Opportunities

As described by Hammond (2017) school districts had difficulty retaining teachers due to a lack of career opportunities. Teachers expressed concerns about their work conditions as a reason for leaving the profession (Hammond, 2017). Yasar and Demir (2015) explained that teachers found it difficult to keep up with the goals set within the classroom. Teachers expected to keep their students happy and engaged in the classroom while dealing with the challenges of meeting goals. Fisher (2016) explained that teachers dealt with the reform within the school district which impacted their ability to develop lessons for their students in the classroom. Fisher (2016) explained that teachers with special education students experienced higher rates of leaving the profession. Teachers who are responsible for core subjects such as mathematics and

English are among the group of teachers who often decide to leave the professional (Fisher, 2016).

Teacher Burnout

Teachers dealt with feelings of burnout for many years due to stressors in the classroom (Daniel & Van Bergen, 2023). Daniel and Van Bergen (2023) noted that

teachers often experienced consequences that were negative when it came to their performance and balancing their well-being. During COVID-19 teachers were forced to learn new teaching styles and different ways to interact with their students (Daniel & Van Bergen, 2023). The pandemic created more job demands on teachers which caused additional stress, exhaustion, and ultimately burnout (Daniel & Van Bergen, 2023).

Rankin (2017) explained that high turnover rates of teachers led to teacher burnout due to the increase in their workload, which left little time for their personal life. Taylor et al. (2019) asserted that teachers found it difficult to balance their personal life with the demands of teaching which resulted in feelings of burnout very early in their career due to low satisfaction with their job. McLean et al. (2019) explained that high rates of turnover for teachers were associated with chronic fatigue and stress which ultimately started with feelings of burnout.

Teacher burnout is a syndrome experienced by professionals at different levels during their careers. Teacher burnout occurred for teachers when they were new to the profession and it happened, for some, very late in their career. Ptacek et al. (2019) explored teacher burnout as a syndrome that affected individuals who dealt with stress daily. The stress of teaching normally contributed to feelings of wanting to leave the profession due to feelings of unhappiness. Teachers were judged when it came to their performance in the classroom which often impacted their level of burnout. Schonfeld and Bianchi (2016) mentioned that burnout impacted teachers' ability to perform at work and maintain their well-being. Kim and Buric (2020) asserted that teacher burnout tended to develop after several stressful events that occurred simultaneously. Teachers who

experienced burnout due to stress were likely to leave their profession and seek another career within the first 5 years, whereas teachers with more experience tended to stay in the profession longer. Manju (2018) asserted that burnout is one of the experiences expressed by teachers that explained why they left the classroom. Teacher burnout consisted of a three-part process that began with emotional exhaustion (Manju, 2018). The second part dealt with depersonalization which started with the teacher disconnecting from the administration and other teachers (Laoide et al., 2018). The third part of the process was the reduction of personal accomplishments such as goals or career development (Laoide et al., 2018).

Manju (2018) discussed burnout as a reason that contributed to teachers leaving the profession. Teachers expressed feelings of tiredness that were either psychological or physical (Manju, 2018). Teacher experiences included emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Ramos, 2020). Teachers experienced stress due to being overloaded with work, classroom sizes that were too large, student behaviors, and the lack of programs to dealt with the issues experienced within the classroom (Ramos, 2020).

Student behaviors were a major focus when it came to teachers leaving the classroom. Simoes and Calheiros (2019) mentioned that teachers are expected to take control of their classrooms and not allow the students to control the tempo and direction of the lessons. Sezer (2018) explained that student behaviors fell into two categories that impacted the classroom and the teacher's ability to maintain control. Student behaviors were reported as cognitive and emotional. Students displayed behaviors such as antisocial behaviors and aggressive behaviors. Sezer (2018) noted that students were known to lack

discipline which results in not following school rules and rude behaviors toward students and teachers. Teachers dealt with students who spoke out of turn and caused interruptions for other students. Each of these day-to-day distractions led to teachers experiencing more burnout.

Smetackova et al. (2019) reported that burnout syndrome impacted the relationship with the students and negatively interfered with the teaching process. Teacher burnout often began as a loss of job satisfaction. Once job dissatisfaction occurred, teachers started to experience a form of exhaustion which resulted in burnout then ultimately teachers left the profession. Maior and Dobrean (2020) asserted that the organization became a contributing component to teacher burnout by overworking teachers and a lack of support. The organization started to require demands of the teacher that were emotionally linked. Teachers often experienced inequality and a lack of achievement as a result of the organization (Maior & Dobrean, 2020).

Lack of Resources

Simoes and Calheiros (2019) asserted that a lack of resources contributed to teachers being stressed and wanting to leave the profession. Previous studies explained how resources enabled teachers to communicate more effectively with their students. Sufficient resources allowed teachers to have the necessary materials to educate their students and create a positive environment (Wiltz, 2020). Simoes and Calheiros (2019) asserted that teachers needed interpersonal resources which allowed teachers to foster the relationships they developed with their students and their peers.

Resources affected a teacher's ability to be successful in the classroom and remain in certain school districts (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Resources were needed for teacher training so that teachers can deal with difficult behaviors and work with their administration. Training would prepare teachers for career development which enabled them to continue their careers successfully (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Teachers in school districts without the necessary resources often decide to leave the profession after 5 years to work in school districts with more privileges, and resources and are racially diverse (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019).

Emotional Difficulties of Teachers

Experiences in the classroom had an emotional strain on teachers however recent studies showed that teachers experienced physical consequences as well. Smetackova et al. (2019) mentioned that teachers experience headaches that impacted their ability to function daily. Teachers experienced issues with their self-esteem which impacted their ability to effectively interact with their students. Teachers who experienced challenges often had interpersonal conflicts. The biggest impact of teacher challenges in the classroom was the experience of depression (Schonfeld & Bianchi 2016).

Schonfeld and Bianchi (2016) mentioned the connection between teacher burnout and depression as teachers started to focus more on their negative emotions and less on positive emotions. Burnout specifically correlated with teachers' professional life whereas depression tended to impact every aspect of their life. Another link between depression and burnout was the presence of stress due to an individual's inability to control their environment. Schonfeld and Bianchi (2016) further explained that teachers

started to lose control within the classroom which caused them to lose sight of their coping strategies when dealing with adverse behaviors. Schonfeld and Bianchi (2016) explored the idea of teacher burnout as being a syndrome of depression in the workplace.

Yasar and Demir (2015) asserted that teachers experienced depression which often exhibited feelings of hopelessness. Teachers started to report a lack of pleasure when it came to their personal life and their career. Teachers experienced boredom in the classroom and oftentimes discomfort. Depressed teachers started to disconnect from other teachers and their peers.

Student Behaviors

As teachers gained control of their classroom, it was important to manage the behaviors of students by incorporating techniques that focused on behaviors. Sezer (2018) explained that teachers should seek assistance from other teachers when dealing with student behaviors. Teachers needed to place students with behavior issues with another teacher. Teachers are also encouraged to meet with parents to see if they can change or alter the behavior of the student. Simoes and Calheiros (2019) asserted that students may need counseling to address those behaviors.

Several studies attributed teachers leaving the profession to student behaviors; however, studies showed that teachers may be responsible for contributing to those behaviors as they bring their negative experiences inside the classroom. Ptacek et al. (2019) explored the consequences of teacher experiences within the classroom by explaining how the feelings of the teacher have a negative influence on the way students learn. Simbula and Guglielmi (2010) mentioned that students witness teachers going

through a conflict with other teachers which impacted the learning environment and contributed to additional stress for the teachers.

Teachers experienced emotional labor when having to interact with others throughout the day (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). Schonfeld and Bianchi (2016) asserted that emotional burnout among teachers was prevalent due to the continuous labor of their emotions. Yashar and Demir (2015) mentioned that emotional labor occurred for most teachers while they are experiencing burnout. Emotional labor happened as teachers are overloaded and experienced failures within their careers. According to Yashar and Demmir (2015), teachers experienced emotional labor which led to becoming very cynical and negative about their job. Burnout was increased when teachers had to satisfy a large number of people including their students.

Self-Efficacy

As teachers started to experience more problems in the classroom, Kim and Buric (2020) explained that teachers with low self-efficacy were more likely to have negative outcomes in the classroom. Teachers are expected to maintain a high level of selfefficacy. Sokmen and Kilic (2019) explained that self-efficacy was the teachers' ability to motivate their students to learn and engage in the classroom. Teachers are expected to overcome the learning difficulties that students experienced by motivating students to think outside of the box. The characteristics of the student had an impact on teachers' self-efficacy and determine if they maintained some level of motivation. Sokmen and Kilic (2019) explained that self-efficacy was determined by the environment and their interactions with the people around them. Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy tended to be

more satisfied with their job when compared to teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy.

Although self-efficacy determines whether a teacher can handle the stress of being in the classroom, Maior and Dobrean (2020) mentioned that depersonalization occurred as teachers began to develop coping strategies to deal with the pressure in the classroom. This type of behavior developed as teachers started to separate themselves from their job. Depersonalization began with depression and anxiety. Depersonalization occurred when the teacher started to experience a work-life crisis. Teachers experienced a lack of control when trying to engage in the work environment which often led to depersonalization, as Maior and Dobrean (2020) explained.

The teaching style of the teacher was determined primarily by their self-efficacy and their belief in their abilities. Simoes and Calheiros (2019) asserted that self-efficacy enabled a teacher to organize and plan their actions in the classroom. Teachers executed an effective plan for their teaching style and take charge of their classroom. Teachers learned to go beyond their performance in the past and focus on improving the experience in the classroom.

The beliefs of the teacher had a great impact on determining the classroom and determined their ability to handle stressful situations. Maior and Dobrean (2020) mentioned that the beliefs of a teacher determined their ability to control the classroom or allow stressful situations to interfere with their teaching. Teachers with negative emotions had an irrational belief system, which created a negative environment within the classroom. Maior and Dobrean's (2020) study showed that teachers with a negative point

of view, often struggled to cope with stressful situations. Teachers with more rational beliefs often made more logical decisions in the classroom that were consistent. Teachers who possessed positive beliefs tend to cope with stressful situations constructively.

Hasselquist and Graves (2020) stated that many teachers found it difficult to establish relationships with other teachers which created a sense of isolation. Teachers who were in mid-career tended to crave connections and relationships with other teachers to feel connected to the classroom and the students. Relationships with peers impacted teachers either leaving or staying in the classroom. Teachers learn to form positive emotions to reduce depression in the classroom. Yasar and Demir (2015) explained that teachers often take on the feelings and experiences of their peers which often impacted their emotions. For some teachers, the relationship with other teachers was forced by the administration which generated greater feelings of burnout (Yasar & Demir, 2015).

Teachers managed their levels of burnout by developing coping strategies and having a support system in place (Ptacek et al., 2019). Teachers are expected to develop relationships with other teachers which will provide a support system at work. Teachers are expected to monitor their work environment and avoid situations that added to their stress. Ptacek et al., (2019) asserted that teachers with a support system at home tended to manage stressful situations better and avoid feelings of burnout. Teachers are expected to take time for themselves to reduce their stress levels.

Teachers are encouraged to monitor their emotions in the classroom which impacted on the classroom (Maior & Dobrean, 2020). Maior and Dobrean (2020) explored the fact that teachers are expected to manage their emotions to prevent

overreacting in the classroom when things are not going as expected. Teachers are expected to control their impulses and the way they interpreted challenges within the classroom. Teachers are expected to tailor their behavior at all times for the betterment of their students (Maior & Dobrean, 2020). Teachers within the classroom are required to remain positive even when they do not agree with the process within the school district (Maior & Dobream, 2020). Teachers have a responsibility to their students and the administration to demonstrate a strong ability to manage conflicts (Yasar & Demir, 2015). Teachers are expected to use their social-emotional abilities to create a supportive and stress-free environment within the classroom.

Teaching Style

As teachers learn to manage their stress levels, they are expected to adjust their teaching style which directly reflects their personality. Simoes and Calheiros (2019) mentioned that teachers should create their teaching style instead of trying to imitate the style of other teachers. Teachers should work towards incorporating their own opinions into their teaching style. Teachers should help students take control of their learning experience. Teachers should set limits on the learning process to prevent demotivating students. The behavior of students deterred the teaching style in the classroom. This behavior increased burnout for teachers. For teachers to have a successful teaching plan, there must be an agreement between the teacher and student that will avoid conflict.

Teachers managed their perspectives on the teaching process.

Why Teachers Stay

Support From Administration

As teachers search for a reason to remain in the classroom having that support from the administration was a key component of whether they stayed in the classroom (Adams, 202). As explained by Adams (2020) teachers often reported a lack of support from the administration when they tried to correct student behaviors or make decisions about their classroom. Kim and Buric (2020) mentioned that teachers would like for the administration to intervene when students or parents caused interruptions in the classroom. Teachers transferred to districts where they felt as though they had some flexibility when it came to their classrooms (Adams, 2020).

Coping Strategies

Hammond (2017) explained that teachers need strategies to deal with the challenges they experienced in the classroom. Coping strategies allowed teachers to manage the challenges that arrived within the classroom. These included ways to deal with the student behaviors and prevent negative behaviors from taking over the classroom (Miller et al., 2019). Teachers created a curriculum to prevent children from becoming bored or uninterested because they cannot relate to the information being shared (Miller et al., 2019).

The administration encouraged teachers to collaborate with other teachers to deal with the challenges they experienced in the field. The administration gave teachers feedback on their performance regularly. Teachers benefited from observing other highly skilled teachers and received strategies for managing the classroom (Hammond, 2017).

Compensation

As school districts searched for ways to compensate teachers, Yesilirmak (2021) explained that many different districts proposed an option that provided raises for teachers based on the quality of their work. Based on his findings, Yesilirmak (2021) asserted that teachers performed better when they experienced compensation for the quality of their work as opposed to being paid a general salary. According to Miller et al., (2019), teachers should be offered stipends for joining schools in rural communities, which prevented many from leaving the profession. Teachers needed loan forgiveness stipends to supplement lower salaries in rural districts which encouraged longer careers (Miller et al., 2019). The need for school districts to supplement the income increased as more and more teachers decided to leave the profession and sought other career opportunities.

Summary

The literature review revealed that teachers were leaving the profession for many reasons. However, school districts in rural communities often experienced the greatest impact of teacher departures due to the lack of teacher salaries, autonomy when it came to lesson plans, student behaviors, lack of support from the administration, and fewer career opportunities (Ramos, 2020). Resources, student behaviors, and higher positions were cited as contributing factors to teachers deciding to leave the profession early, however, there was a lack of knowledge from the perspective of the teacher to determine if those factors ultimately led to their departure from the field (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Student behaviors and high demands played a critical role in a teacher's decision to

depart the profession early especially when teachers experienced a lack of support from their administration to either cope with the challenges or have alternate solutions for continuous interruptions in the classroom (Rankin, 2017). Teacher attrition created an impact on many school districts due to their inability to maintain high-quality teachers (Rankin, 2017). Although school districts in rural communities recruited high-quality teachers, it became increasingly more difficult to retain those teachers due to the challenges they experienced within their first 5 years (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

As previous quantitative studies focused on the statistics related to teachers leaving the profession and the impact on school districts, this qualitative study contributed to filling a gap in the research literature by providing insight into the challenges faced in the classroom. It is important to understand the day-to-day challenges that came with being in the classroom as well as dissatisfaction with pay, increased workloads, and lack of support from their administration (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Statistically, we understand that teachers leave for higher-paying jobs and better career opportunities however this study provided insights into the experiences of teachers in the classroom and provided school districts with information to develop strategies that aided teachers in the classroom.

Chapter 3 covered the qualitative research methods used to understand the experiences of teachers and what led to their decision to leave their profession early in a rural area of the Southeast United States. Chapter 3 included details about the methodology, participant selection, data sources, instrumentation, data collection method, and data analysis plan.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This qualitative study was conducted to explore the experiences of teachers who left their profession within the first 5 years of teaching. This generic qualitative study described the experiences of teachers and what led to their decisions to leave a rural school district as opposed to making teaching their career. Participants were asked about the challenges they faced in the classroom and how those challenges influenced their decision about their careers. In this chapter, I described the research design, including the rationale for the generic qualitative study, the role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative study was based on the problem that teachers are leaving the profession early in their careers, which contributed to the teacher shortage (Miller et al., 2019). Teachers have been noted to leave the profession for better-paying jobs, better school districts, autonomy when it came to lesson plans, and better career opportunities (Miller et al., 2019). Teacher attrition—that is, the rate of teachers departing the profession during the school year—impacted school districts and often caused a shortage in many areas (Miller et al., 2019). As teachers continue to leave the profession, this is causing school districts to struggle to fill vacancies and retain teachers who have career aspirations (Miller et al., 2019). The research was designed to understand specific aspects of the social problem of teachers leaving the profession. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research by discovering the interests of participants and their beliefs

(Merriam, 2019). Quantitative research seeks to understand participants ahead of the study by calculating and measuring their responses as opposed to understanding their perspectives (Merriam, 2019). This study used a generic qualitative approach to describe the phenomenon of teachers leaving the profession early and starting new careers. The question guiding this study was: What day-to-day experiences in the classroom do teachers describe related to their departure from the profession in the first 5 years?

Qualitative research, as described by Patton (1990), was conducted by a researcher to explain the activities of the group or individual being studied. Patton (1990) described qualitative research as an opportunity for a researcher to experience the interactions by being involved in the activity through the descriptions of participants. Reliable qualitative research employed skillful interviewing techniques and observations and incorporate a thorough content analysis (Patton, 1990). Through the use of qualitative research, a researcher was allowed to focus on specific groups or individuals and identify common themes to explain the phenomenon being studied. This contrasts with quantitative research where a researcher focused on the numbers to understand the phenomenon as opposed to using the experiences of the participants (Miller et al., 2019).

A generic qualitative approach was selected to understand teachers' experiences in the classroom and their relationship to why they departed the profession early in their careers. Lui (2016) emphasized a generic qualitative researcher being flexible with the study and the participants, which allowed for more in-depth explanations of the phenomenon. This approach was appropriate for this study as I was focused on the perceptions and descriptions of participants about their own experiences (see Percy et al.,

2015). A generic qualitative approach allows the interview to flow freely without being too formal (Jacobson, 2016). The interview questions were open-ended to allow the teachers to fully describe their experiences within their first 5 years teaching.

Role of the Researcher

According to Karagiozis (2018), a researcher's role was to understand the participants' points of view. The researcher was responsible for analyzing the perspectives of multiple participants and providing a space for open and transparent conversation (Karagiozis, 2018). The researcher was responsible for creating the narrative of the participants as opposed to a narration of their story (Karagiozis, 2018). As the researcher became more involved in the study, the knowledge gained was used to construct the study (Karagiozis, 2018). As the researcher, I did not have any relationships with the participants. The participants were chosen from various social media groups, such as Facebook, and referrals from other teachers. As the researcher, I let the participants know that I would ensure that any biases would be addressed by avoiding any influence on the participants by asking questions that are general and not leading the participants in any particular direction (see Patton, 2015). In conducting this study, I also kept a journal of the process to track my thoughts and ideas while I was interviewing participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher was also responsible for caring about ethical issues that developed during a study. As explained by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the researcher had a responsibility to report any concerns that arise to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The researcher must also understand their values to guide their decisions for the study

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher was responsible for treating each of the participants as an individual and not just a subject for a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each participant, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), was entitled to an informed consent form, privacy, and the avoidance of any deception. Karagiozis (2018) asserted that a researcher should avoid becoming encapsulated, which involved focusing on one perspective without being flexible to other alternatives.

Methodology

The methodology of this study was qualitative. Semi-structured interviews were used to ask participants to describe their day-to-day experiences teaching and whether those experiences led to their departure from the field.

Participant Selection Logic

The participants in this study were teachers who left the profession within 5 years of being in the profession. In this study, participants were asked to describe experiences that led to leaving their position in rural communities early in their careers. The criteria for inclusion in the study were that teachers had experience in the classroom, left the profession within the first 5 years, and taught grades K-12 in rural school districts in the Southeast United States. Current teachers were excluded from the study and asked not to influence any teachers who wanted to participate. Teachers who were fired from the profession were excluded as well.

A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit participants for the study. Through purposive sampling, researchers found specific respondents from different backgrounds who share ideas about a common issue (Campbell et al., 2020). Campbell et

al. (2020) explained that purposive sampling was used to select participants who are likely to share knowledge about a subject. I also planned to use snowball sampling, asking current participants to refer individuals who qualify to participate in the study (see Patton, 2015).

Raven (2020) explained that the number of participants is based on how much data are needed for a study. According to Raven's (2020) findings, participants preferred smaller groups of participants to speak freely about their experiences within the classroom. This study consisted of 8 to 10 participants to complete the interview guide, based on Creswell (2013), who stated that this number would provide sufficient data to understand a phenomenon in a qualitative study. To gain access to teachers, I sought participants through social media platforms, such as Facebook groups for teachers, LinkedIn, and Twitter (see Schussler et al., 2016). I also asked for referrals from other teachers who left the profession and from those who contacted me.

Saturation is reached when the participants started to reveal similar experiences within the classroom. As described by Hennink and Kaiser (2021), saturation was achieved when the data starts to lack theoretical insights. As the researcher continues to seek saturation, saturation justifies the sample size (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Saturation allowed the researcher to bring the study to a close and use the data provided by the participants to answer the research question. If saturation was not achieved with the participants interviewed, recruitment would have been extended.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study included interviews as a method of collecting data. Each of the participants was interviewed separately to protect their identity and create a safe space for participants to speak without reservation. In this study, focus groups were avoided so that each participant could share their experiences without the fear of their stories being repeated without their knowledge. The interviews provided firsthand knowledge from the participants on their experiences inside the classroom. I conducted the data collection by interviewing each of the participants. The interview protocol allowed the participants to include their own beliefs in their answers while also including the constructs of the study (Braaten, 2020). The questions I developed were based on studies that focused on teachers leaving the profession even though most failed to include detailed observations from teachers. The interview questions provided teachers with an opportunity to describe their perspectives on the influence of the administration, parents, and students while also trying to manage the day-to-day operations of the classroom.

Based on the theoretical framework (see Maslow, 1943), motivation played a key role in determining the longevity of teachers in their careers. This knowledge about motivation led to the creation of interview questions to learn if a lack of motivation influenced teachers' decisions to depart from the profession. To gain a clear understanding of the influence of students, parents, and the administration, additional interview questions were created. To ensure the validity of the content, the questions were viewed by two educators who were not involved in the study. Validity was ensured

by educating the participants that their personal information would be kept confidential, which would allow each participant to answer questions freely without the fear of retaliation.

Merriam (1998) asserted that content validity is obtained by completing member checks. This process ensured that the responses of the participants were analyzed accurately (Merriam, 1998). Keogh et al. (2021) recommended coding to analyze and classify how the codes are created to capture the responses of the participants. As noted by Keogh et al. (2021), a researcher was responsible for ensuring that no data are lost during the coding of data.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The data source for this study was teachers who have left the profession within 5 years and who were interviewed using semi structured interview questions. As the researcher, I conducted one 45–60-minute interview with each participant. Participants were recruited using Facebook social groups that included teachers who are no longer in the field and teachers who switched school districts for various reasons. I sent a flyer requesting participation from social media group members. If the recruitment strategy did not result in enough participants, I asked for recommendations from current teachers. Individuals who responded were asked if they were willing to participate via video interview or provide their responses via email. Interviews were conducted using a video program, such as Zoom. The data was recorded by the video program and as a backup a tape recorder was used. To avoid any issues with trustworthiness, I made sure each interview was processed the same way using the same system. The interviews were

transcribed and reviewed for accuracy before being analyzed, according to procedures recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). After the interview took place, each participant received a copy of their responses to the interview questions to check for accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Creswell (2013), data analysis consists of analyzing data and drawing preliminary conclusions about the data collected. Through the process of data analysis, the information gathered was processed into codes and examined to define categories for the data (Creswell, 2013). After the data was collected and placed into categories, themes were developed, which allowed a researcher to compare the data collected (Creswell, 2013). The researcher was responsible for detecting the commonalities between the different themes that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2013). The analysis of data for this study followed Kahlke (2014), who summarized data analysis as understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences. To stay close to the data, Kahlke (2014) suggested the use of content analysis as a strategy to see the data more clearly. Patton (2015) explained that content analysis involved searching through the data for words that are reoccurring. Kahlke's (2014) steps of data analysis included: comparing methods to bring a clear understanding of the data, analyzing the findings within the framework, and locating any factors that bring a better understanding of the perspective. Content analysis was used to develop any patterns within the responses of the participants and identify any consistent patterns with the data.

The data weas collected to answer the research question to understand the experiences that led to teachers leaving the profession. During the data analysis, each of the interviews was reviewed to identify codes and categories (Kahlke, 2014). Each of these was highlighted by colors to determine the frequency of certain words and phrases to develop themes. Likewise, these were color coded to identify any common themes among participants' experiences.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was obtained by authentically representing the participants within a study (Lester & Anders, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that a researcher was responsible for presenting the information collected in a way that makes logical sense to the reader and can reach a variety of audiences. Patton (2015) described trustworthiness as a balance to account for the different perspectives of the participants. Trustworthiness, he wrote, was a balance between the different constructs and experiences of the individuals involved. Trustworthiness was important for the researcher to ensure by representing the participants and cohesively conveying their experiences.

Credibility

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that credibility was obtained by interpreting the method used to construct the study. According to Lester and Anders (2018), credibility was enhanced when the researcher provided a different point of view to represent the different participants. Patton (2015) recommended maintaining prolonged contact with the participants to establish credibility within the study. Patton (2015) also described establishing credibility by staying in constant contact with the participant.

Patton noted that the researcher maintained credibility by observing the participants and focusing on the details of the study. Throughout the process, it was critical to keep in contact with the participants once their interview questions are completed. As the researcher, it was important to assure the participants that their perspectives will be translated to represent their points of view.

Transferability

The researcher ensured transferability by making sure that the data was described sufficiently to allow transferability from one study to another. Triangulation was used to capture the perspective of multiple participants and avoid having only one opinion about a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The researcher was expected to provide enough information to establish the similarities between the different studies. The researcher was responsible for providing enough details about the study to determine which parts of the study were transferable to a different study. Amin et al. (2020) wrote that the researcher should avoid conducting superficial research that prevented a full understanding of the phenomenon.

Dependability

The third part of the process of ensuring trustworthiness was dependability, which involved the researcher preparing the research in a well-documented and traceable way (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) explained that dependability occurred when the information gathered was logical and made sense. As the researcher, it was important to document each part of the process and to ensure that each step followed a logical process to help better understand the information gathered.

Confirmability

The final part of the process was confirmability where the researcher showed a connection between the data collected and the interpretation of that data. The researcher needed to link any findings to make the data relevant (Patton, 2015). As the researcher, it was important to confirm the data by checking all the information gathered and then checking the data again. The researcher was responsible for clearly interpreting the findings to represent the perspective of the participants.

Ethical Procedures

The IRB board approved reaching out to participants to start the recruiting process. Once approval was received, I made sure each of the participants understood that their involvement was strictly voluntary and does not come with any monetary incentives. Participants received documents that outlined their responsibility during the study and their rights as participants. I avoided ethical concerns by being transparent about the process and all the steps involved. The informed consent emailed to each participant, and interviews were scheduled once they are completed. Ethical concerns were addressed by sharing with each of the participants how their information was used and the benefits of participating in this study. Their information was kept private at all times using secure data systems. The information was stored using a secure data system that required a password. As the data was analyzed each participant was given a code name that was used throughout the duration of the study. No additional parties would have access to this information other than myself. Any of the data collected would be

protected using forms that are password protected and kept confidential. The identity of the participant would be protected at all times to avoid any privacy concerns.

The researcher was responsible for ensuring the ethical procedures within the study are followed. The relationship between the participant and the researcher must be protected and not influenced by any outside sources. Lester and Anders (2018) explained that the researcher should take themselves out of the study and experience the study as someone constructing information. The researcher was responsible for making all the information anonymous and protecting vulnerable populations. All confidential information was stored in a password-protected file which was accessible to me. The identity of the participants was not discussed with any of the other participants or third parties. As the data was revealed the participant's identity was replaced with codes that only the researcher had access to. Before interviewing the participants, The IRB reviewed all documents used to recruit participants, as well as consent forms and interview questions. (Walden University https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/research-ethics/review-process).

Summary

Qualitative research allowed participants to share their experiences from their perspectives (Ramos, 2019). This study used a generic qualitative approach to provide an opportunity for participants to explain a phenomenon from their perspective without interference from the researcher (Patton, 1990). The role of the researcher was to gather the perspective of the participants to better understand the phenomenon. The research question was based on the problem of teachers leaving the profession, which led to a

teacher shortage in many school districts, especially in rural areas. The rationale for the research approach was to better understand the teacher and their time in the classroom and their reasons for leaving the profession. Participants were interviewed by the researcher and data was gathered through semi structured interviews. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), this approach allowed participants the opportunity to express their experiences in a less formal setting. The interviews were analyzed through a thematic analysis. Chapter 4 described the data gathered from the participants via interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Recent studies on teachers leaving the profession lacked the perspective of teachers who made the decision to leave the profession early as opposed to finishing their careers. This basic qualitative study was conducted to understand the experiences of teachers who left the profession within their first 5 years. This study offered some insights into the reasons teachers state that led to their decision to end their teaching careers early.

Chapter 4 includes the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results of the study. This chapter described the setting of the participants and any influences inside their home that impacted the study. The setting described their experiences as they participate in the study. The demographics described their characteristics that were important to the study. The data collection section analyzed the responses of the participants and any common themes among the participants presented via the data analysis. The evidence of trustworthiness included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The research question that guided this study was: What day-to-day experiences in the classroom do teachers describe as it relates to their departure from the profession in the first 5 years? Their responses included comments on the administration, student behaviors, pay, other teachers, work load, and career development.

Setting

Zoom was used to conduct and record the interviews with the participants. Each of the participants was informed of the importance of being visible on camera and to avoid any background distractions. The interviews took place from my personal office and the participants were located in their homes. The interviews took place with minimum distractions and the avoidance of interference from people within the participants' homes. One concern with conducting in-home interviews via Zoom was the possibility of participants having interruptions from other family members. I expressed the importance of being in a quiet location while the interview was conducted. The interviews were completed without any distractions or influence from outsiders. The interviews were completed with the participants' privacy intact. No one reported any experiences in the workplace that may have influenced their responses to the interviews.

Majority of the participants within the study had already started new career opportunities after their experiences in the classroom. For some of the participants, this created a great deal of sadness simply because they missed the children they previously worked with and their excitement for learning. Some of the participants indicated that their negative experiences often came as a result of budget cuts in their school district. The budget cuts reduced the staff at their schools, which often resulted in larger classroom sizes. The larger classroom sizes created conflict among students which created many interruptions. One of the participants experienced trauma within her school district with students fighting on a regular basis. This constant interruption made it near impossible for her to effectively educate her students.

Demographics

The participants for this study included teachers who had left the profession within their first 5 years of teaching. The teachers taught grades K-12 and worked in secondary school districts. Each of the participants was a full-time teacher during their years of teaching, and each of the participants experienced different challenges during their time in the classroom. The teachers ages ranged between 26 and 38. Each of the participants had their teaching license from the state of Mississippi, Texas, or Alabama and had at least a bachelor's degree in the field. This study had eight participants to ensure data saturation was reached. The study was limited to only include teachers who left the profession and worked in school districts in the Southeast United States. The recruitment process solely relied on social media and referrals from other teachers. To ensure confidentiality, each of the participant's identity was assigned a coded name.

Table 1 displays the demographics of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Grade	Years in classroom
Teacher 1	26	African American	Female	2nd	3
Teacher 2	30	African American	Male	1st	2
Teacher 3	33	Caucasian	Female	4th	4
Teacher 4	27	African American	Female	3rd	2
Teacher 5	35	Mexican	Female	4th	3
Teacher 6	37	Caucasian	Male	3rd	1
Teacher 7	38	Asian American	Female	5th	5
Teacher 8	29	Caucasian	Female	3rd	4

Data Collection

The process for conducting this study began by obtaining the approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and then searching for participants via social media outlets. I recruited participants by posting a flyer on Facebook asking participants to reach out to me if they met the criteria. The individuals who showed an interest were emailed to make sure they understood the study and to provide their informed consent to participate in the study. Twelve individuals showed interest in participating, but only eight met the criteria. Each of the participants chosen had left the classroom for various reasons early in their career.

Before beginning the interview, I provided each participant with an overview of the study for 10-15 minutes and explained the purpose of the study and the impact to social change this study could have. After the overview, I opened the discussion up for questions in case the participants did not understand the purpose of the study. The next step was to complete the interview by asking each of the participants the interview questions. The interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes to complete, depending on the participants. After completing the interview, I reviewed the answers with the participants to make sure I captured everything they wanted to say about the topic.

The study included eight participants who were former teachers who had left the field within their first 5 years. This number of teachers provided enough data to gain insights into their perceptions and why they left the field of teaching. The data were collected using semi structured interview questions, which allowed teachers the opportunity to describe their experiences freely. The interviews took place using the

questions listed in the appendix. During the interview process, it was important for me to remind the participants to discuss their experiences and not any negative interactions that did not pertain to the topic at hand. The participants did not have access to the questions prior to the interview to avoid any rehearsed answers or answers of influence. The process outlined in Chapter 3 was followed and adhered to without any adjustments. The interviews were recorded using the Zoom platform's recording capability. Once the interviews were completed, the transcripts from the interviews were uploaded to the

NVivo software program, which was used to support the process of manual coding.

Data Analysis

The data was examined using Kahlke's (2014) model for content analysis to explain the similarities within the data. Content analysis was used to develop patterns across the data collected from each of the participants. Kahlke (2014) recommended the following steps to analyze the content: comparing methods used to gather the information from the participants, analyzing the findings within the data, and locating factors that contributed to the data. The data were also analyzed using qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. The participants were sent the transcripts of their interview for validation. Each of the participants were allowed time to review and make sure they answered the questions to the best of their ability. Once the participants reviewed their interviews, they were asked to email their responses back.

The data analysis began once I received each of the transcripts back from the participants. I read through each of the transcripts to fully understand the data. The files

were also uploaded to NVivo for data analysis, which was used as a secondary method to organize and analyze the data. These results were also analyzed using Kahlke's approach to data analysis. According to Kahlke (2014), during this phase, codes are identified then clustered into categories from which themes are developed. The themes allowed for a greater understanding of the phenomena and enhanced the understanding of the participants' perceptions. Through the data analysis, I was able to identify participant statements that were responsive to the research question. Based on the responses of the participants, the codes were lack of administrative support, lack of resources, student behavior, and lack of parent support. Categories emerged from each of these codes, including not having enough resources for their classroom, lack of support in addressing student behaviors, lack involvement from parents, pay, career development, and burnout.

Several themes emerged from the data highlighting (a) student behavior, (b) lack of support, (c) lack of career development, resources, training, and (d) COVID-19. One of the reoccurring themes was that student behaviors contributed to teachers leaving the profession early. Another theme that emerged was that the administration played a part in teachers' decisions to leave the profession due to the lack of support teachers felt when attempting to discipline their students. Another emerging theme was the lack of career development to advance their career and explore other opportunities outside the classroom. Resources played a role in teachers' decisions to leave the profession. COVID-19 impacted the teachers in a way that was difficult for many to manage. The way they interacted with the students and the administration changed drastically. Some of the teachers were able to adapt while others struggled to find their way. There were no

discrepant cases and the codes indicated that majority of the participants had similar experiences in the classroom when it came to their dissatisfaction.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Patton (2015) emphasized the importance of trustworthiness by balancing the perspectives of the different participants. Patton (2015) explained that trustworthiness comes from a balance of constructs and the experiences of the participants. To ensure trustworthiness I made sure each of the participants point of view was represented and their experiences were conveyed. I also made sure that I removed any potential influence to the data by scheduling interviews during times where there would be little interference.

The participant information was safeguarded so that no one knew their identity.

Credibility

Credibility occurred when the method for the study was interpreted to understand the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility was enhanced when the researcher was able to provide a different point of view to represent each of the participants (Lester & Anders, 2018). The credibility of the study was analyzed for accuracy by ensuring that each of the participants answered the questions to the best of their ability. The accuracy of their responses can greatly impact the credibility of the study. As the researcher, I have to ensure that the information provided by the participant in this study is accurate and valid. At the conclusion of the study, each of the participants were given the opportunity to validate their responses by viewing the transcripts of their interviews. I also made sure that I did not have any biases towards teachers or the administrations in the school districts. During this process, I studied the questions and did not make the participants

feel uncomfortable while sharing their experiences. I reviewed their responses while analyzing the data to make sure the participants were thoroughly answering the questions. As the interviews took place, I made sure that I did not interfere with the participants responses or interrupted while they were speaking. I understood that this was a difficult process and the participants needed to feel safe while revealing their experiences.

Transferability

Transferability occurred when the data can be transferred to other students with similar literature to find a different meaning (Amin et al., 2020). As with transferability, it was the responsibility of the researcher to avoid including information that is not easily understood to explain the phenomenon (Amin et al., 2020). The results of the study were transferable because they can be used for other teachers who have left the profession perhaps at different stages of their career. Teachers explained their experiences and what led to their departure during their time teaching. This study can be used for studies that include teachers from different age groups that were not covered during this study. This study can be used for other demographic groups to determine if the results vary based on other demographic groups. This study met the criteria by including participants who represented different age groups, diverse backgrounds, and different ethnicity groups.

Dependability

Dependability occurred when the data was trustworthy, which included properly preparing the data by documenting and making the information traceable (Patton, 2015). The data should be logical and easily read by researchers (Patton, 2015). The results of this study was dependable because of the consistency of the responses, which added to

the trustworthiness of the research. The results of this study were based on the responses of the participants account of their experiences while in the classroom. As I reviewed the results of the study, I was careful to prevent any errors or misrepresentation of the participants responses. The results allowed other researchers to repeat this study and retrieve valuable information that may be used in various settings. Although the researchers may not come to the same conclusion as this study, the information was used to improve the experiences of teachers.

Confirmability

Confirmability occurred when there was a connection between the data that is being collected and the understanding of the data (Patton, 2015). The information made logical sense and showed a connection between the literature and the new data that had been collected by the researcher (Patton, 2015). To ensure confirmability it was important that the responses of the participants were accurately captured and that I avoided the contribution of my opinion and/or thoughts. As someone who has spent majority of my life around teachers and learning from teachers, I know that my opinion about the experiences of teachers may be impacted based on what I have witnessed while in the classroom. It was important for me to keep any biases that I possessed to a minimum and not allow that bias to influence the opinion of the participants. The participants responses were accurately represented based on their experiences in the classroom. Based on their responses, it was possible to develop thematic sequences and understand the common themes between the participants.

Results

In this section, I presented the findings of this study and addressed the research question: What day-to-day experiences in the classroom do teachers describe related to their departure from the profession in the first 5 years? The goal of this question was the to learn about the reasons teachers left the profession within their first 5 years of teaching. The interview questions produced three major themes. There were two subthemes for Theme 1, one subtheme for Theme 2, and three subthemes for Theme 3, for a total of six subthemes. Table 2 shows the questions asked during the interviews and the themes and subthemes that emerged from data analysis. In the following section, I discussed each of the themes and subthemes.

Table 2

Questions and Data Themes

Questions	Themes
Can you describe day-to-day challenges in the classroom that were related to your decision to leave the profession? Describe your perspective when it comes to career development and motivation to handle the challenges faced in the classroom. What are some administrative changes that would have kept you teaching? Were there interactions with anyone that contributed to your decision to leave? If so, who?	Theme 1: Support Subtheme 1.1: Lack of support from administration Subtheme 1.2: Parent involvement Theme 2: Training Subtheme 2.1: Career development Theme 3: Burnout Subtheme 3.1: Student behaviors Subtheme 3.2: Workload Subtheme 3.3: COVID-19

Theme 1: Support

Support from the administration was a major concern for the teachers. The support from the administration determined how they would handle student behaviors

and what options they would use as reinforcement. The lack of support from the administration meant that many of the difficult decisions regarding student behaviors would ultimately fall on the teachers. The teachers desired more influence in the way they taught their students; however, many of the teachers felt as though they were left out of any major decisions. This theme focused on the support that teachers received while in the classroom. Each of the participants (n = 8) commented on a lack of support from the administration during their time in the classroom. For example, Participant 2 described the lack of concern from the administration as their reason for leaving the profession and noted, "The administration is an integral part of the morale of a school. Teachers can feel valued or invaluable by admin. Having true support of the administration goes a long way with teachers."

The teachers stated they often experienced challenges in the classroom that prevented their ability to teach their students. The administration lacked showing empathy when needed in order to figure out the challenges the teachers were experiencing. Participant 6 felt as though the administration would introduce new initiatives that were presented as solutions for ongoing issues within the school; however, they never executed on those ideas. Participant 6 stated:

> When concerns were raised about the lack of administrative presence in the classroom, the principal would routinely drop by the classroom but only for a brief moment—never staying long enough to witness my teaching style or the learners' learning styles.

The teachers felt as though the administration did not properly prepare them for the challenges they would be experiencing in the classroom. As student behaviors intensified, their need for additional support increased. In describing student behaviors and the lack of support from parents and administrators, Participant 3 commented, “Being in a pre-K setting, we as teachers were looked at more as babysitters and not educators. There was a lack of respect, and I felt like more of the help than the teacher.”

Subtheme 1.1: Lacking Support From Administration

As the teachers focused on their reasons for leaving the profession, many of the participants concluded that their administration was instrumental in their decision. Participant 6 indicated the administration contributed to their reason for leaving the profession. The participant described starting their career very excited about becoming a teacher. Becoming a teacher was a dream come true however the daily demands of students and the administration quickly started to diminish the excitement that was once felt for the classroom. As a teacher, there was so much pressure to complete lesson plans while also dealing with student behavior, and the administration rarely stepped in to lighten the load. Regardless of how much effort the teacher put forth in the classroom, there was always a push for them to do more. Participant 8 expressed a negative experience with the front office and administration. Participant 8 stated the following about the administration:

> The administration contributed to my decision to leave the job because they never really supported the teachers when they made decisions. The administration would excuse the behaviors of the students, especially if they have influential

> parents who frequently visited the school. The teachers at the school were very supportive when it came to helping each other out. They would purchase extra supplies so that everyone had what they needed in order to be successful.

Other negative experiences were described by Participant 2 who said,

> Interactions with the front office staff also contributed to my decision to leave. There was a time when one of my students was constantly and intentionally being disruptive while I was giving instructions on an assignment. Sending that student to the principal office changed absolutely nothing. They were sent to [in school suspension] for 1 day and were allowed back in my classroom. The disruption continued, and I tried to contact the students' mother by phone, email, even a note.

She continued, "My concerns about this student were never addressed. Other teachers did not influence my decision, they were actually encouraging me to stay. The teachers understood and supported each other."

The participants mentioned the lack of communication from the administration, which often resulted in teachers not having flexibility and in teachers taking on more than their share of the workload. The teachers did not receive support when it came to obtaining additional resources for their classroom. Participant 4 stated the following about the administration:

> The actions of the administration and lack of communication from administration. Resources being pooled into having a police presence or focusing on gender identity, not affirming or supporting children in many instances. Lack of

flexibility, workload, being asked last minute to sub for a colleague without compensation.

Subtheme 1.2: Lack of Support From Parents

The parents played a critical role in the teachers' ability to have support outside the classroom. The expectation was that parents would reinforce what the teachers were trying to accomplish within the classroom. Many of the teachers learned that the parents were not on the same page, and parents often did not support teachers' decisions when it came to dealing with student behaviors. Some participants (n = 3) commented on the lack of support from parents when trying to solicit additional support to manage student behaviors. Participant 7 experienced a lack of support from the parents when it came to keeping the students on track. The teacher would often reach out to the parents when there was an issue inside the classroom, and often the parents responded in a disrespectful manner. The lack of support from the parents often resulted in the students not listening when teachers tried to correct behaviors. Parents did not support teachers when they requested additional disciplinary action toward the children. Participant 2 stated: Reaching out to parents when students would break the rules inside the classroom and the parents would often disregard their concerns. The teachers were looking for the parents to step in and correct behaviors that were counterproductive to the classroom; however, very rarely did the parents come to their aid.

Participant 2 also commented about the struggle to get parents to show up to extra curriculum activities at the school. Additionally, Participant 4 described some parents as viewing the teachers as daycare providers. Some parents don't, or can't, provide the

emotional and mental support it takes to raise a child and it absolutely shows up in how the student presents in class. Being cursed by the student and their parent on multiple occasions because of a cellphone situation happened on one too many occasions.

Student behaviors continued to be a sore spot for many of the participants. The parents often contributed to the lack of support the teachers felt when it came to disciplining and correcting behaviors in the classroom. Participant 6 stated: Although students' behavior issues played a role in my decision to change my career path, I cannot put the blame on the students because of behaviors are taught. I cannot in good faith blame a child for speaking in the same manner as their parents. Getting the parents involved was so taxing. A lot of my students came from working-class families, which also means their parents were unavailable more times than not. While I do not know if having support from the parents would have changed my mind, not having their support certainly contributed to my decision to resign.

Theme 2: Training

As the teachers dealt with the increasing behaviors of students and the disengagement of parents, teachers often felt as though they were not properly prepared. The teachers stated that needing additional resources to prepare for managing behaviors that are challenging and disruptive in the classroom. The teachers understood how to plan their curriculum however it became difficult when they encountered students who learned differently. Their training only prepared them to teach information in one way however it did not prepare them to teach in different forms and styles. Participant 2 commented about not feeling prepared to deal with multiple challenges they faced in the classroom:

Student behavior was definitely a contributing factor. Despite my best efforts to create a lesson plan that fit the curriculum and was engaging, the vast majority of the learners were disengaged. Like, pulling out their cellphones during instruction time or putting in Air Pods, which was prohibited. It also did not help that we did not have a lot of parent support.

The participants also shared their concerns about classroom experiences by expressing some of the challenges they faced when trying to control the environment in the classroom. Participant 2 went on to explain how the administration lacked direction and refused to focus on the best interest of the children:

> In a classroom of 29 learners, maybe 5 would attend school events. But my biggest reason was lack of resources. The curriculum was very muted and did not provide a lot of social or emotion situational and less teaching. They were focused on social development more than learning. It also did not help that the curriculum was always changing so it would have been a challenge for many of the students to grasp the knowledge, regardless.

The lack of resources contributed to the frustration that many of the teachers felt, especially when they experienced the constant financial strain of purchasing their own supplies in the classroom. The teachers were constantly responsible for managing their supplies so that they can continue with their lesson plans. Participant 3 explained a similar experience:

> The primary challenge was lack of resources books that were torn and tattered, having to spend my own money and time providing things like pens, pencils, and

> notebooks for students. But back to lack of resources. Not just physically not having the items that were needed to help with the students but lack of communication with administration and parents/families. There seemed to always be a disconnect on what could be discussed with families; classroom or school wide. This caused a deep strain on my ability to do my job with teaching. Leaving work was just not something done- grading papers, being available to students and parents after hours, planning the next school day, an endless cycle. No breaks.

Subtheme 2.1: Career Development

Career development was a concern for many of the teachers especially once they completed their first couple of years. The teachers expressed an interest in learning new skills and having additional training to deal with the many changes that were happening within the education system. Career development was a concern for each of the teachers (n = 8) whether they were just starting in their careers or had been teaching for a while. Participants indicated that career development did not seem to be a major focus for the administration. Younger teachers often desired to advance their careers and progress beyond the classroom (Tuan, 2020). Many teachers started their careers with optimism and excitement about their career and the possibilities to move up in the field. The participants began and ended their career in the same position. Some participants indicated that they wanted the opportunity to attend seminars and conferences that will provide resources to help advance their career. Participant 1 described the inconsistencies when it came to career development:

> The career development opportunities are very rare and inconsistent. Once you become a teacher there are not that many opportunities unless you seek higher education or outside training resources. I tend to become motivated when I can teach my students something new. The administration does not add to my level of motivation at all.

Career development was a big concern for the teachers especially when it came to providing their students with a good education. The teachers wanted more control of the information they were providing to their students. Much of the information did not cater to the learning style of the student. Participant 4 stated,

> Teachers should be more involved when it came to developing the curriculum in the classroom. Some of the teachers felt as though their knowledge would be valuable to producing curriculum that the students could understand regardless of their learning style.

Theme 3: Burnout

Teachers expressed concerns with burnout and feeling a sense of hopelessness when it came to improving conditions in the classroom. The challenges that the teachers faced seemed to constantly continue without many options for support. Teachers commented the student behaviors as being a primary problem in the classroom. When expressing concerns about the constant interruptions they were often met with criticism from the administration about their inability to control the classroom. On top of student behaviors, teachers also dealt with an increase in workload. The workload would consist of developing curriculum and/or assisting another teacher with their classroom.

Participant 6 expressed feeling burnt out when it came to dealing with the changes in the classroom. The feeling of burnout tended to have adverse effects on the participants because it often impacted their ability to complete their daily tasks. Burnout often led to the participants experiencing a lack of motivation to be fully engaged in the classroom and with their peers. Participant 4 stated that a lack of resources contributed to her feelings of burnout:

> The primary challenge was lack of resources—books that were torn and tattered, having to spend my own money and time providing things like pens, pencils, and notebooks for students. But back to lack of resources. Not just physically not having the items that were needed to help with the students but lack of communication with administration and parents/families. There seemed to always be a disconnect on what could be discussed with families; classroom or school wide. This caused a deep strain on my ability to do my job with teaching. Leaving work was just not something done- grading papers, being available to students and parents after hours, planning the next school day, an endless cycle. No breaks.

Subtheme 3.1: Student Behavior

On some level, each of the participants dealt with students misbehaving or creating chaos within the classroom. The behaviors of the students often overshadowed what the teachers were trying to accomplish within the classroom. Participant 1 expressed concerns with the administration not providing support when dealing with student behaviors and aggressive parents. The lack of support from the administration led students to belief that their behavior was acceptable. Participant 1 also stated, “Daily

challenges that I faced in the classroom were student behavior. The student's short attention spans also caused problems in the classroom. Another challenge was my classroom items that I had to personally pay for being destroyed or taken."

As the teachers experienced a lack of resources and cooperation from the parents and the administration, they began to explore other options that would keep the students engaged in the material. Participant 2 experienced challenges with student behaviors despite constantly trying to find different methods to reach her students and connect with them. Participant 2 stated, "Despite my best efforts to create a lesson plan that fit the curriculum and was engaging, the vast majority of the learners were disengaged."

As the teachers searched for ways to engage the students, it became more difficult after losing the students' interest. Participant 3 stated,

> Students were disengaged due to having limited resources. The limited results lead to students not having the options to take books home and learn the material being covered. The results of this caused students to be disengaged in the classroom. Many students had parents who were not involved which resulted in students lacking the motivation to learn.

Participant 7 said they

> started their career very excited about their future and the time they would spend in the classroom; however, the behaviors within the classroom ultimately contributed to their decision to leave the classroom. The behaviors were unmanageable and lacked consequences from the administration.

Subtheme 3.2: Workload

The workload of the teachers constantly changed as the curriculum changed. The curriculum would change often to include new policies or material. It was difficult for teachers to keep up with the rapid changes in the classroom due to their limited resources such as training material and books for students to take home. The workload often was so severe that teachers found themselves taking work home in order to keep from falling behind. Participant 4 experienced the following: "Leaving work was just not something done- grading papers, being available to students and parents after hours, planning the next school day, an endless cycle. No breaks." Participant 4 stated that teachers often have to care for other teachers' classroom when they were not at work. The administration would not step in to assist however the expectation is that their classroom would be cared for by the other teachers.

Participant 3 explained the following about the administration when it came to the workload:

> Not a particular interaction, just the continued actions, lack of communication from administration. Resources being pooled into having a police presence or focusing on gender identity (not affirming or supporting children in many instances). Lack of flexibility, workload, being asked last minute to substitute for a colleague without compensation.

In summary, the workload seemed to be a driving force for many teachers when it came to deciding to leave the profession. Despite their best efforts, the administration did not assist teachers when it came to dealing with an increase in student behaviors and

workload. Teachers were often left to figure out how they would manage juggling both demands. The lack of preparation for such challenges also contributed to teachers wanting to leave the profession.

Subtheme 3.3: COVID-19

COVID-19 was an unexpected change to the daily lives of each of the teachers. COVID-19 changed the way they interacted with their students on a regular basis and the way the students interacted with them. For some teachers, this meant they had to learn a new way of communicating while other teachers adapted quickly to the change. During this time, many of the teachers felt as though they did not have the support of their administration due to the lack of meetings and communication about the constant changes. The workload often increased as teachers became ill or left the classroom all together. Participant 2 said:

> Events such as COVID have come with its own set of setbacks concerning children. When preparing teachers to take on the task of educating scholars, it is imperative that we get a glimpse of the whole child. Having a better representation of all kids and their needs is imperative in developing programs that will adequately equip teachers to educate all children. I think the motivation is lacking across the board. I feel as though some teachers are just over it all. The teachers did not anticipate the impact that COVID-19 would have on them or their students. In many ways they were not prepared for all the changes that took place during that period of time.

Participant 6 stated:

> During COVID everything changed with the way we taught our students and the way we engaged with them on a daily basis. We did not receive any guidance from the administration on ways to keep the student involved or how to develop our curriculum in a way that was easy for the students to follow. We basically had to figure it out each week based on trial and error. As a teacher, I felt totally unprepared to handle this new change and can only imagine the students felt just as confused as I did.

Summary

Although each of the teachers had their own experiences that contributed to their reason for leaving the profession, they shared similar challenges in the classroom. Majority of the teachers commented that they never intended to leave the classroom but circumstances outside of their classroom contributed heavily to their decision. Often, the teachers entered their careers with excitement and enthusiasm about the contributions and changes they could make within the school district. The most common theme amongst the participants was the administration. Teachers entered the classroom with such high expectations of their leadership and were often met with disappointment when their requests were not honored. The students contributed to their concerns however the teachers felt as though they would have been better prepared if they received support from either the administration or the parents. Many of the teachers felt as though they would have been more successful in the classroom if they had received additional training and resources to manage their classrooms more effectively. Another major concern of the teachers was the lack of training they received to deal with the issues that

were reoccurring in the classroom. The teachers felt as though they could have dealt with the challenges more efficiently if they were able to receive training and additional skills that taught about mental health issues and disruptive behaviors. The concern regarding training emerged as COVID-19 became a daily concern for the teachers. The teachers were expected to completely change the way they interacted with their students and the way they presented material to the students.

Chapter 5 provided an overview of the objectives of this study and the findings. During the next chapter, the themes will be explained and how this information may contribute to the field and contribute to social change. Chapter 5 also included information on how future inquiries may be made to continue the study on teachers and their reasons for leaving the field. The next chapter provided details into the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the findings, recommendations, implications, and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the reasons for teachers leaving the profession early in their careers and the experiences that contributed to this decision. Semi structured interviews were conducted with eight teachers in school districts in the Southeast United States to gather data to answer the research question. Previous studies on this topic used survey and focus groups to understand the reasons teachers left the profession and decided to change careers rather than completing their careers in the classroom. These studies focused on external factors such as pay, poor working conditions, socioeconomic status of students, and location of the school that pushed teachers out of the classroom. Few studies have focused on the perspectives of teachers and their experiences within the classroom.

This study was conducted to bring awareness to the experiences of teachers and their perspectives on their reasons for leaving the teaching field. The teachers expressed concerns with lack of administrative and parental support, as well as with their lack of training to prepare them for the challenges they were experiencing within the classroom. One of the findings of this study was that the participant, teachers, wanted more support from the administration when it came to dealing with troubled students. The administration had the power to manage the behaviors of students by implementing more consequences for disruptions. The administration is responsible for training teachers to the point where they can effectively manage behaviors without allowing those behaviors

to disrupt the classroom. From the perspective of the teachers, the administration did not properly prepare them for the continuance of misbehavior from students.

Chapter 5 explained the findings and the interpretations of the findings based on the themes developed from the data collected through participants' interviews. This chapter also includes a discussion of the previous literature and the theoretical framework to provide a deeper understanding of the findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations based on the data analysis. Finally, this chapter will include potential implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings included the following themes: (a) support, (b) training, and (c) burnout. Each of the themes had subthemes that highlighted the specific experiences of the teachers that led to them leaving the teaching profession. The research question led the direction of this study and determined how the study would be organized. The study was led by the following research question: What day-to-day experiences in the classroom do teachers describe related to their departure from the profession in the first 5 years? The research question was developed to allow teachers the opportunity to explain their experiences each day in the classroom.

The themes were developed from the teachers' descriptions of their experiences and the challenges they faced within the classroom. The first theme was developed based on the experiences of teachers who desired to have additional support when dealing with student behaviors. Based on previous literature, teachers often report a lack of support when it comes to administration providing guidance to manage student interruptions or

inappropriate behaviors (Torres, 2020). The lack of support is a consistent concern across various literature, and participants reported that this contributed to their lack of motivation. This finding certainly reflects Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which indicates that when individuals lack motivation it can impact their ability to be successful at their jobs.

The literature on motivation indicated that teachers who are motivated tend to spend more time in the classroom (see Maslow, 1943). Motivation served as a driving force to encourage individuals to stay engaged and increase their abilities on their job (Engin, 2020). Motivation can lead individuals from thinking primarily about themselves but about the well-being of others (Engin, 2020). The literature suggested that teachers were more engaged in the classroom and with the development of curriculum when they were motivated and felt support from their administration (Engin, 2020). Participants stated they had a lack of motivation due to the limited support they received from the administration and the parents. Parents played a critical role in the motivation of teachers because parents often did not support teachers when it came to disciplinary actions toward students.

Previous studies indicated that teachers have not felt prepared to handle the challenges they face in the classroom. As teachers try to understand the behaviors, they are experiencing in the classroom with their students, their lack of training and resources leaves them feeling unprepared. Garcia and Weiss (2019) explained how teachers are disappointed in their administration because of the limited resources and development they receive. The literature states that school districts are often conflicted with budgets

and deadlines that prevent their ability to provide the additional resources needed to prepare for the classroom (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The literature indicates that teachers want training to improve their skills on managing difficult behaviors without interfering with the learning experiences for other students. Teachers often fear that reaching out for help is an indication they are incapable of doing their job.

The literature supports that teacher development is a top priority in school districts that retain teachers. Rankin (2017) indicated that teachers with higher education have a higher tendency to complete their career in the classroom. Teachers who lacked education and training tended to move around within school districts searching for greater pay and development opportunities (Rankin, 2017). School districts that invested in the development of teachers are able to maintain high quality teachers for long periods of time during their career. Teachers' development includes collaborating with tenured teachers to nurture the culture and policies within a school (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). During this study, the participant, teachers who left the profession, expressed a desire to have more training and the ability to seek mentorship from more tenured teachers. The participants indicated that their development would have contributed to their ability to manage student behaviors, create extensive curriculum, and handle parents. The participants attributed their need for development to improving the quality of education they provide to the students.

Previous literature has indicated that resources played an integral role in maintaining high quality teachers. The literature suggests that resources can determine whether teachers decide to stay in a school district or leave the district for better pay

(Yesilirmak, 2021). The literature indicates that some districts are able to pay teachers a competitive salary while other districts are operating on limited resources and career opportunities for teachers (Yesilirmak, 2021). As the literature suggests, resources play a part in whether teachers have adequate supplies for the classroom and materials to develop their curriculum (Yesilirmak, 2021). Participants expressed concerns regarding having to purchase supplies on their own due to limited availability from the administration.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand teacher's experiences while working in the classroom. Majority of the teachers left he profession within the first 5 years of teaching without finishing their career. This study did include some limitations. Chapter 1 reviewed the possible limitations of the study and any biases that may arise from either myself or the teachers (Bellamy et al., 2016). The first limitation of the study dealt with the credibility of the participants and their ability to provide accurate information without the fear of retaliation or fear from the administration or school district. To care for this limitation, each of the participants identification was coded to prevent their names from being provided. The participants were informed that their information would be placed in a database that would only be accessed by myself and the research committee. The purpose of this study was to avoid generalization of their experiences and provide an indebt detail of their time in the classroom and how their experiences led to their departure. Another limitation of the study was to address transferability of the data from one study to the next. This information provided school

districts and the administration with the information needed to improve the experience of the teachers. Another limitation was my own bias towards teachers and my own opinion as to why they left the profession. To care for this limitation, I researched and studied the reasons teachers have left the profession at different points in their career. Based on the literature, teachers had many reasons as to why they left the profession which included a lack of motivation and career growth (Ramos, 2020). Another limitation was the validity of the participants and their experiences. The sample size was small however the study did show saturation. Saturation was obtained with the reoccurring themes in regards to their experiences.

Recommendations

This study led to the discovery of teacher experiences and how those experiences ultimately resulted in their departure from the profession. The gap in the research was fulfilled based on the data collected from teachers about the dissatisfaction and disappointment they experienced within the classroom. Based on the data collected during this study, future research can continue by exploring the experiences of teachers who work in school districts with limited staff, resources, career opportunities, and an abundance of student behaviors. This study can be expanded by focusing on motivation theories which imply that teachers who are motivated will work harder to maintain their career and stay in the school district they are in.

The primary focus of this study was teachers located in rural school districts in the southeast. The first recommendation would be to provide teachers in school districts located in suburban areas with better resources. The next recommendation would be to

explore the behavior of students and how student behaviors are managed in the classroom. Another recommendation would be to understand the relationship between the administration and teachers. The administration was a reoccurring theme within the study. By focusing on the administration and their role when it comes to providing support for teachers when it comes to student behaviors and career development.

This study may lead to a better understanding of whether there are true differences between teachers in rural and suburban school districts. Further studies like this one could expand on the role that may also contribute to understanding how much student behaviors contribute to teachers leaving the profession. It would also be good to learn more about whether teachers had support managing those behaviors and if this would prevent teachers from wanting to leave the classroom. Another recommendation is to focus on the career development of teachers and whether their development will lead to expanding their time in the classroom. Such a study might reveal if teachers who develop their career are more likely to remain in the classroom and continue working on ways to improve their experiences. Focusing on this approach might provide more insight into ways to prevent teachers from leaving the school districts by focusing on what motivates them and ways the administration can provide more support.

Implications

Based on the findings of this study, positive social change can occur for teachers by focusing on their experiences and developing more career opportunities for teachers to improve their management skill when it comes to challenges in the classroom. The focus on teacher development can improve their experiences in the classroom and lead to

teachers finishing their career in the classroom because they have the resources needed to manage their classroom more efficiently. The focus on teacher development can have adverse effects on the school as well. Teachers who are motivated tend to invest in the betterment of their environment. Teachers having more development opportunities may result in less focus being placed on student behaviors and more time spent developing curriculum. This study may provide insight into the experiences of teachers and how the lack of support from the administration contributed heavily to their decision to leave the field. This study has offered some suggestions to school administrators on ways to support teachers and provide them with the necessary skills to be successful. For example, school administrators could develop a process that will allow tenured teachers to work with newer teachers. Mentorship for teachers can create an environment where teachers have a direct resource to assist with the challenges they are facing. Mentorship can also help teachers who are seeking more career opportunities and development skills. Teachers would also have the opportunity to learn from more experienced teachers who can teach skills for resolving conflicts that arise within the classroom.

Conclusion

Teachers have been leaving the classroom over the years at an alarming rate which has caused some concerns for school districts (Ramos, 2020). This study used a qualitative approach to understand the perspectives of teachers who left the profession during their 5 five years of teaching. This study was developed to understand what contributed to their decision to leave the profession and what changes might prevent teachers from leaving in the future for the same reasons. This study contributed to the

previous research literature that did not include the experiences of teachers who recently left the profession. Due to the increasing demand for teachers, it is important to understand why they have chosen to leave the profession.

Eight teachers from Southeast school districts were chosen to share their experiences within the classroom and the challenges that led to their departure. The experiences of the teachers focused on their day-to-day interactions with students, parents, staff, and other teachers. During the data analysis of their interviews, three major themes emerged: support, training, and burnout. The results of the study indicated that the participants were not satisfied with the administration and their methods for handling student behaviors. This echoed previous literature where teachers described enjoying their careers and not having a desire to switch careers (Tuan, 2020). Oftentimes, the teachers would mention that additional training was needed to prepare for the reoccurring challenges they faced when it came to the students. Each of the participants expressed a desire to for more career development to advance their career and to be better prepared to handle the challenges within the classroom. At least three of the participants mentioned starting their careers and having a desire to finish their career due to their passion for teaching. These statements reflected the theoretical framework focused on the elements of motivation identified by (Rankin, 2017) and the impact that motivation can have on a person's decision to remain where they are or choose something different. Often, teachers chose to leave the profession because they were not motivated about their careers and their administration did not show support when it came to career development.

Teachers leaving the classroom has been an ongoing conversation for many years. Some studies indicated that teachers are leaving the profession for more money while other studies indicate that teachers are lacking support from their administration. The findings of this study revealed that the teachers who left the classroom often experienced challenges in the classroom that contributed to their desire to change careers or school districts. The administration was a major contributor for many of the participants who decided to leave the profession. The participants often cited a lack of support and resources from the administration which prompted their decision to leave the classroom. Many of the teachers experienced having to purchase items for their students that should have been provided by the district. Another major concern of the participants was the lack of career opportunities and career growth. The lack of growth oftentimes meant that the teacher would remain in the same position for years to come.

My goal in conducting this study was to contribute to positive social change by illuminating the day-to-day experiences of teachers who spent years in the classroom and dealt with challenges on a regular basis. Teachers who often experienced heavy workloads and misbehaving students, which ultimately made it impossible for them to be successful in the classroom, need more support. Improvements identified in this study could contribute to positive social change in communities by lessening teacher attrition and could benefit the wider community by giving teachers the need to help students succeed and prepare for college.

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Appendix A: Title of Appendix

1. Did you envision leaving the teaching profession during your first 5 years of teaching? If so, can you tell me why?
2. Can you describe day-to-day challenges in the classroom that were related to your decision to leave the profession?
3. Were there interactions with anyone that contributed to your decision to leave? If so, who?
    a. Probing questions will be asked if these are mentioned, such as the following:
        i. In what way was the administration instrumental in your decision to leave the profession early?
        ii. Tell about a time when the students or parents played a role in your decision to leave the profession.
        iii. How much influence did other teachers have on your decision to leave the profession?
4. Describe your perspective when it comes to career development and motivation to handle the challenges faced in the classroom.
5. What are some administrative changes that would have kept you teaching?

Is there anything more you would like to share about your experiences?