

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND JOB SATISFACTION
AMONG URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

by

Paula Anita Murphy

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this correlational study was to investigate the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers in an urban school district. This study is important because it helps to develop an understanding of how the cultivation of sense of community is related to job satisfaction and provides insight in middle school urban learning environments. This study examined the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction where social interaction occurs in an educational setting. The theories guiding this research were McMillan and Chavis' sense of community theory as it relates to sense of community and Maslow's theory of hierarchal needs as it relates to job satisfaction. The sample size for this research included 113 middle school teachers from an urban school district located in northeast Georgia. The participants were surveyed using the Sense of Community Scale (SCI-2) as the predictor variable and the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) as the criterion variable. In examining the relationship between two variables, a bivariate regression was used to determine if sense of community was a predictor for job satisfaction. Based on the data collected within this study, urban middle school teachers' sense of community was found to predict their level of job satisfaction. Suggestion for future research includes additional research on how teachers' sense of community impacts traits including attrition, self-efficacy, and student performances and how moderating variables such as online learning platforms and school safety relate to job satisfaction. Future research should also include exploring other theoretical models that could provide some valuable insights and consider how these constructs operate in a more diverse context.

Keywords: sense of community, job satisfaction, attrition, urban, teachers

Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my family who has influence and supported me to be all that I can be. My loving husband and life-long soulmate (Paul), who has made so many sacrifices and waited patiently for countless hours. It is your encouragement, love, and support that have helped me throughout this journey. In loving memory of my father (Dr. Rev. Julius Britt Jr.), I would like to thank you for “making” me go to college when I was unclear of what I wanted to do after high school. It was your belief and the value of education that you instilled to help me reach my greatest potentials and goals.

I would also like to honor my mother with this manuscript, who has been my prayer warrior and inspirational leader throughout my entire life. Your God-fearing words and effortless smiles have always kept me humbled and committed. I would be remiss if I did not recognize my three lovely daughters (Shatira, Tatyana, and Destiny) whose wit and charm filled my life with laughter, even when I wanted to give up. Thank you, God, for entrusting me with your most precious prize possessions. Thank you, girls, for supporting mommy on this journey and for understanding why I was not always able to attend some of your band concerts or competitions. Thank you to my siblings (Lisa, Paulette, and Julius) for loving me for who I am, and for bringing laughter and comfort throughout this journey. In loving memory of Arthur Ouzounidif, thank you and Mrs. Helen for believing in me by taking a chance to give me my first job at Georgio’s Pizza. Your trust and gravity has helped me to become a better and stronger person. And thank you God for carrying me along on this journey which would not have been possible without you. Deuteronomy 31:6 commands, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (NIV).

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List of Abbreviations

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Georgia Department of Education (Ga DOE)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS)

National Education Association (NEA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Sense of Community (SOC)

Sense of Community Index (SCI)

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of Chapter One is to provide an overview of the background and literature for this study. This chapter identifies the problem this research addresses by providing a problem statement, a purpose statement, and an explanation of the significance of the study. Chapter One also identifies the research question and relevant terms for this research.

Background

In fall 2018, more than 57 million students attended elementary and secondary public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). As the rising number of students calls for more teachers, the U.S. faces a national crisis of teacher shortage. Teacher attrition rates are continuously increasing in public schools in the United States as it becomes difficult to attract and retain effective teachers. In addition, schools in high-poverty areas are at an even greater risk of retaining highly qualified educators (Chestnut & Cullen, 2014). Research shows job satisfaction is related to teacher attrition among other reasons for leaving the profession (Kraft & Papay, 2014).

Many educators enter teaching careers with the expectation of making a difference in student outcomes centered around academic and social success (Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). Attrition rates of teachers have been identified as one of the leading issues confronting education and are attributed to teacher shortages around the nation, particularly in urban and socially challenged environments (Chestnut & Cullen, 2014). The notion of being a teacher renders preconceived ideas of making a difference in children lives. Educators also consider their careers to be rewarding as they give back and are called to serve others (Dowd, 2018). Teachers are the cornerstone of education as they facilitate and disseminate knowledge to

prepare students for a brighter future. The success of education hinges on the knowledge, skills, practices, and experiences of teachers. The daily task of a teacher includes classroom management, delivering content, providing differentiated instructions, monitoring student progress and assessing them while maintaining a professional disposition. Notably, the role of a teacher extends beyond a classroom of ensuring academic success as teachers help shape students' self-esteem and confidence as well as inspiring their career aspirations and attitudes toward school (Dowd, 2018). The job of a teacher includes many challenges that require knowledge, self-discipline, and dedication in various environments. This research seeks to find the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers in an urban setting.

High cost and student achievement are negatively impacted by teacher attrition rates, which has been increasing since 1994 with an alarming rate of 30% not returning within their first five years (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003). According to Gray and Taie (2015), 10% of teachers beginning their careers in 2007–2008 did not return the following academic year, 15% of novice teachers in 2009–2010 did not teach in 2010–2011, and 17% of new teachers in 2010–2011 did not return to the teaching profession the next school year. Additionally, urban schools reflect a third higher in teacher attrition rates (Shuls & Maranto, 2014). As teachers are fleeing the profession, there is a growing concern for the educational system that enforces accountability for educators. Notably, the premise of education and responsibilities of teachers has changed over the last three decades with an influx of diverse students (Hull et al., 2017). Latino immigrants are fast becoming the majority of minority students in public schools in many urban areas (Hull et al., 2017). In addition, African

Americans are a subpopulation of minority students who continue to struggle with academic success as school climates have changed (Cornbleth & Sleeter, 2011).

Historical

During the 18th century, common schools evolved consisting of one room buildings with multiple age groups that were inclusive of the wealthy and elite. Prior to 1900, the federal government was not heavily involved in decisions concerning education initiatives or reform for primary through secondary education (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). By 1910, 72% of American children attended public schools (Graham, 1974). In 1920, the Progressive Era led to the expansion of fast-growing schools in metropolitan cities (Herbst, 1996). Once schools became integrated in the mid-20th century, they became a catalyst for the civil rights movement.

Landmark cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) created provisions for equal rights in education for African American students. The explosion of diversity created many schools in rural and urban areas. However, the achievement gaps among minority and disadvantaged students became a growing concern. In response to these concerns, the federal government initiated a mandate, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, that provides federal funds for schools with high percentages of poor children to help ensure student achievement.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was designed to focus on the underserved in an attempt to improve student achievement. With the passage of NCLB, Congress reauthorized ESEA, the principal federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In 2015, former President Obama reauthorized ESEA, replacing it with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The intent of ESSA was to mandate equal opportunities for all students to prepare them for college and career readiness

(U.S. Department of Education, 2018). This mandate offers critical protection for disadvantaged and high needs students, often concentrated in urban areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Research indicates that these demands and accountability often lead to teacher burnout and high attrition rates that are often associated with sense of community and job satisfaction (Jones, Young, & Frank, 2013). This study seeks to find a predictive relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers, particularly in urban areas.

Sense of Community

High sense of community has been linked to lower rates of teacher burnout and lower rates of attrition (Jones & Davenport, 2018). Teachers with high sense of community have lower burnout rates and are more likely to stay in their positions than teachers with lower sense of community (Jones & Davenport, 2018). Teachers, students, parents, stakeholders, and the school benefit as an entity from teachers with a high sense of community. A strong sense of community has been shown to produce higher teacher performance. Furthermore, high sense of community allows teachers to improve their teaching pedagogies (Jones & Davenport, 2018; Madrid, 2016; Sass & Harris, 2012).

Research shows similarities in how community members and academic scholars explain sense of community (Mannarini & Fedi, 2010). The concept of sense of community has pioneered current studies that attempt to fill the gap of understanding sense of community among different ethnic groups. Jason, Stevens, and Ram (2015) conducted a study using ethnicity, identity, and membership as predictable behaviors to understand sense of community from an ecological prospective. Their findings suggest that all three domains (ethnicity, identity and membership) are necessary to understand the experiences of individuals as they develop a sense of community; however, they do not always coexist. Smucker (2014) observed the desire for a

sense of community among Wall Street employees by examining multi-level sense of community among occupations with different ethnic groups. Smucker (2014) concluded that there must be a balance in liberal and political group bonding to foster sense of identity, community, and wholeness among different ethnic groups.

Research also shows that identity has a positive connection with sense of community (Barbieri & Zani, 2016). Identity is a component of both sense of community (SOC) theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The sense of community theory was pioneered in the works of McMillan and Chavis (1986) and is a leading construct in the foundation of this study. The sense of community theory demonstrates how membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment are crucial components in developing a sense of community. The absence of feeling a sense of community may have a variety of negative consequences, such as feelings of alienation, loneliness, and psychological distress (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). This study sought to explore if there is a predictive relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers in an urban environment.

Job Satisfaction

Research shows that there is a link between job satisfaction, burnout, and attrition rate among teachers (Marinette, 2017; McCarthy, Lambert, & Reiser, 2014; Simon & Johnson, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Many factors reportedly cause teachers to abandon the profession, such as lack of motivation and school environment which are contributing factors to job satisfaction. Previous studies on employee motivation led to relating Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) to job satisfaction, further leading to his construct of motivation. The components of Maslow's theory include physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization, aesthetic needs, and transcendence. Maslow (1943)

explained in his hierarchy of needs theory that a sense of belonging is needed before feelings of esteem and self-actualization. Safety and security are components that are foundational to Maslow's hierarchical needs theory. By understanding how these motivators impact job satisfaction, educational leaders could potentially increase the retention rate of teachers (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Staff satisfaction is critical to the success of educational institutions (Muthia & Krishnan, 2015).

Problem Statement

Few studies have investigated how sense of community is directly related to job satisfaction (Boute, 2017; Welbourne, Gangadharan, & Esparza, 2016). Additionally, few studies investigate the relationship among sense of community and job satisfaction in a teaching and learning environment where social interaction occurs (Kuo, Walker, Schroder, & Belland, 2014). Current research addresses the relationship of forming a sense of community and how it relates to job satisfaction among different groups in a non-educational setting (Ragins, Gonzalez, Ehrhardt, & Singh, 2016). Lampinen, Viitanen, and Konu (2015) investigated the relationship among sense of community and job satisfaction of managers in a health care setting. Their findings indicated that leadership style of the manager was related to their sense of community. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) conducted a study on sense of community and job satisfaction in a banking sector and telecommunication industry. The study suggested that businesses need to realize the significance of positive working environment for maximizing the level of job satisfaction. Furthermore, current research also fails to investigate these variables among teaching in a traditional school setting. Many of the existing studies are related to online learning environments rather than a traditional setting that promotes social interaction (Kuo et al., 2014). Sense of community and job satisfaction have also been studied in other countries

with an emphasis on school culture. You, Kim, and Lim (2017) investigated job satisfaction and school culture among secondary teachers in Korea. The findings revealed that there is a relationship among sense of community, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction and the influence it has on professional practices.

Numerous studies have shown how job satisfaction is linked to the environment and other variables in an educational setting rather than sense of community (Pund, 2015; Ye, Verma, Leep, & Kronstadt, 2018). Additionally, there is a notable trend of higher teacher attrition rate in schools with a large proportion of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds who also are challenged with learning difficulties (Dupriez, Delvaux, & Lothaire, 2016). A need, therefore, exists for determining if there is a relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction as well as the possible actions that may be taken by educational policymakers to improve the experiences of teachers to reduce attrition rates. This study examined the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers in a traditional educational urban environment. Urban school environments are schools that serve predominantly minority, underprivileged students within a municipality (Djonko-Moore, 2015).

Teachers are leaving the classrooms at an alarming rate, creating a national teacher shortage crisis. The problem is that additional research is needed to explore the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers, particularly in an urban setting.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate if there is a predictive relationship between teachers' sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers amongst an urban population. This quantitative study used a correlation research design to examine the

relationship among two variables. Sense of community, the predictor variable, was defined as a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through commitment to be together (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Job satisfaction, the criterion variable, referred to an affective and positive job-related reaction to the workplace (Worrell, Skaggs, & Brown, 2006).

The population for this research consisted of middle school teachers from an urban school district located in northeast Georgia. This district consisted of 55 schools, 36,000 students and nearly 3,600 certified teachers (Georgia Department of Education [Ga DOE], 2018). The sample included 113 middle school teachers from different ethnic backgrounds including African American, Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, and other demographics from five middle schools within the district. The researcher used the Sense of Community Index (SCI-2) and the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) to measure sense of community and job satisfaction in the study sample. Both the sense of community and teacher job satisfaction surveys used Likert-scale questions as the vehicle for data collection. This study examined the possible relationship of sense of community (predictor variable) and its potential impact on job satisfaction (criterion variable) by focusing on the unexplored population of middle school teachers in an urban environment located in northeast Georgia.

Significance of the Study

Filling teacher vacancies in low-income urban schools is significant to this study. These vacant positions have posed a challenge for educational leaders (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). Additionally, a recent study of teacher attrition in 16 urban school districts across seven states found year-to-year district attrition averages at 13% (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). Both novice teachers and veterans have become dissatisfied with teaching for a variety of

reasons and teacher turnover is at an extreme high in schools across America (Hanushek, Rivkin, & Schiman, 2016). This study is significant because it addresses gaps in the literature about the relationship of factors affecting high attrition rates among teachers specifically in an urban environment.

This research explored the socialization experiences of teachers and how teaching amongst an urban population is associated with the relationship of sense of community and job satisfaction (Chih-Chung, How-Ming, & Tsang-lang, 2017). Job satisfaction, job involvement, and sense of community of teachers in rural areas are higher than those of those in urban areas (Chih-Chung et al., 2017). Additionally, a significant difference in teacher involvement between teachers working in schools in urban areas and those working in schools in rural areas (Chih-Chung et al., 2017). If sense of community and job satisfaction in an urban traditional school environment are found to be comparable to the sense of community and job satisfaction in other traditional school environments, then educators will have another tool at their disposal to help reduce attrition rates. Little is known about middle school teachers' experiences in a traditional school environment regarding the relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction. Understanding how the cultivation of sense of community is related to job satisfaction will provide insight into urban learning environments.

Furthermore, this study is important because it adds to the existing body of knowledge of similar studies aimed at understanding the relationships of teachers' job satisfaction amongst other variables and the impact it has on student achievement. This study also discussed the following relating topics of sense of community and job satisfaction: school culture and climate, motivation, teacher efficacy, student achievement, working conditions, and attrition rates. Inferences from this study could be used to support teachers in different learning environments to

reduce attrition rates. In addition, this study could be useful to scholars, parents, educational leaders, and supportive learning environments.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a predictive relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and sense of community among middle school teachers in an urban school district?

Definitions

1. *Attrition* – the rate at which teachers leave the profession (Aquila, 2008).
2. *Burnout* – fatigue, frustration, or apathy resulting from prolonged stress, overwork, or intense activity (Freudenberger, 1974).
3. *Construct* – an idea or theory which contains a number of interacting elements which can be subjective in nature and develop over time (Kelly, 1963).
4. *Community Attachment* – the emotional ties one has to a local area and includes residents' feelings about whether they feel rooted or “at home” in a community and their thoughts about moving (Hummon, 1992).
5. *Culture* – social inclusion (Pratt, 2016).
6. *Job satisfaction* – the extent to which a person's hopes, desires, and expectations about the employment he or she is engaged in are fulfilled (“Job satisfaction,” n.d.).
7. *Maslow hierarchy of needs theory* – a motivational theory that comprises a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid (Maslow, 1987).
8. *Retention* – maintaining teachers within the school or field of education (Murnane & Steele, 2007).

9. *Sense of community theory* – a theory that proposes a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through commitment to be together (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).
10. *Urban School Environment* – schools that serve predominantly minority and low-income students within a city geographical location (Djonko-Moore, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two is presented in four main parts: an overview, a theoretical framework, a review of related literature, and a summary. The four parts of the chapter all tie back into the purpose of the study, which is to investigate whether a relationship exists between job satisfaction and sense of community for middle school teachers in an urban school district. The theoretical framework section examines the theories that were related to the study, which includes the sense of community theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and the hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1962, 1987). The related literature presents a thorough background of information on the two variables, sense of community and job satisfaction. The related literature section also discusses the influences of sense of community and predictors of job satisfaction. The last part of Chapter Two is the summary, which concludes the chapter by tying everything to the purpose of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Sense of Community Theory

The sense of community theory provides a framework for the basis of this research, focusing on how middle school teachers experience a sense of community in an urban school environment through membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Sense of community typically refers to a geographical location, though it can personify itself within a relational quality regardless of physical setting (Phillips, 2012; Warner & Dixon, 2011). McMillan and Chavis (1986) contended that the term “community” can be dualistic in nature and the meanings are not mutually exclusive. One meaning of community refers to territorial and geographical regions,

and the second connotation deals with relational aspects regarding human relationships with no reference to any geographic location (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This study focuses on merging both terms in looking at the social aspects regarding human relationships of teachers in an urban environment.

The idea of a psychological sense of community was first conceptualized by Sarason (1974). According to Sarason (1974) sense of community is the feeling that one belongs to and participates as a part of a larger communal of individuals. Experiencing community is not solely knowing other individuals but rather feeling as if one is a part of a system which provides close relationships and overarching principles (Sarason, 1974). McMillan and Chavis (1986) later proposed a theoretical framework for sense of community that included four components: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986) membership is an exclusive quality in which there are people on the inside and those on the outside who are not part of the community. The membership component is characterized by feelings of belonging, emotional security, and identification (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Membership refers to the status of being part of an organization. Within the idea of membership are also the concepts of boundaries, security, belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). It is through these interactions that relationships are formed, and a sense of community arises within a school. For the purpose of this study, the community is represented by all stakeholders including teachers, support staff members, administrators, students, parents, the district, community leaders, residents and businesses. Communities are often formed within groups as individuals gear towards those who they can identify as having common needs or goals (Hammonds, Matherson, Wilson, & Wright, 2013). For example, small communities are formed

within school environments, such as a group of science teachers or perhaps grade level teachers, often collaborating to establish common goals. Teacher communities can play an essential role in fostering collegiality within the organization and boosting morale as members experience increased feelings of belonging and commitment (Madrid, 2016). The interaction within these communities fosters participation among these groups, influencing members. Participation and collaboration are important components for developing a sense of community among members (Madrid, 2016).

The third component is integration and fulfillment of needs, which is a reinforcement and motivator of behavior. Integration and fulfillment of needs imply that the group can satisfy the physical and psychological needs of its members, which in turn reinforces members' commitment to the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Finally, shared emotional connection derives from sharing or identifying with the history of a community through personal investment and interaction with other members of the community. Shared emotional connections equate to contact and high-quality interaction (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Experiences are derived from membership interactions as group members make connections. People often look for opportunities to fulfill their desires as they affiliate themselves with a group. If a group is found in which others possess the same interests, priorities, and goals, the belief is that the need will be more likely met than if it was attempted alone (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). It is through this bond that members interact, which is a key quality of acquiring a sense of community.

The sense of community theory speaks volumes as it articulates the essential components that are necessary for classroom teachers to feel a sense of community. The ideas behind the sense of community theory informed this study because if the components of the theory are not present, then teachers may experience a lack of belonging or isolation. McMillan and Chavis

(1986) claimed community is a feeling of belonging and mattering to a group and needs are met through commitment to each other. Regardless of the setting, participants within a community search for membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The sense of community theory has been studied in higher education, elementary, high schools, Christian environment, and virtual settings; however, little research can be found that applies this theory to the middle school in a traditional educational setting (Barbour & Reeves, 2009).

Harvey, Greer, Basham, and Hu (2014) conducted a study that examined middle school students in the online learning environment. The findings for this study indicated that online learning was an overall positive experience for those students who participated in the study, and most of the individuals had favorable attitudes toward taking online classes. However, Harvey et al. contended that there was a lack of social interaction that the students had (i.e., the sense of community that is established among students in a traditional classroom setting). An online learning platform typically presents itself in an environment of isolation because of the lack of physical interaction. According to the sense of community theory, shared emotional connections are fostered through social and physical interaction.

Madrid (2016) conducted a study in a Catholic school and discovered connections between teacher friendships, retention, and enhanced instruction. This study showed how these variables also connected to sense of community for teachers. The study investigated interaction, personal investment, identification, security, and a sense of belonging among educators and claims that friendship reinforced membership and shared emotional connections. Teachers worked to provide support for each other year after year, which added to the sense of community

being built within the school. This theory helps to inform and reinforce the important components necessary for building sense of community in a traditional educational setting.

Alfano and Eduljee (2013) conducted a study in search of a relationship for college students that lived on campus versus living off and their sense of community. The results revealed that 73% felt they were a part of the college community compared to 43% of commuter students. However, both cohorts agreed they desired to participate in more school-sponsored activities, which also attributes to building a sense of community (Alfano & Eduljee, 2013). This study relates to the theory by providing insight on shared emotional connection among human relationships. Traditional schools' environments allow for social and physical interaction and reinforce membership of a particular school or building. Shared interaction and membership are vital components of the sense of community theory that informs this research in investigating a relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers in a traditional setting among an urban population.

Although teachers are motivated differently than students, a lack of membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection in conjunction with not having a sense of community could be addressed to present a more positive experience for the teachers. Sense of community remains an important entity in education as it serves as a predictor of job satisfaction (Boyd, Nowell, & Yang, 2017). This study advances the sense of community theory because it focuses on human interaction in a social and physical context in a traditional educational setting. Much of the literature that was found for the sense of community theory specifically dealt with the geographical notions of a sense of community. However, this study explicitly deals with individuals' feelings of belonging in an educational school setting as it relates to the sense of community theory. Current studies also fail to examine the relationship

for sense of communities for teachers, as existing educational trends focus on student achievement (Kaput, 2018). This study can provide insight for traditional educational leaders on how to support teachers and influence a sense of community in their environment.

Maslow's Hierarchy Needs Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory capitalizes on motivation; however, its main tenets are applicable to the work setting and have been used to explain the psychology behind job satisfaction. This theory forms the foundation in understanding how drive and motivation are correlated when discussing human behavior as it relates to job satisfaction. Maslow's theory explains that the appearance of one need rests on the prior satisfaction of another need (Maslow, 1959). Maslow's original theory presented itself as a hierarchal framework ranging from physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, to self-actualization. Maslow (1943) initially stated that individuals must satisfy lower level deficit needs before progressing on to meet higher level growth needs. However, Maslow (1987) later clarified that satisfaction of a need is not an "all-or-none" phenomenon, asserting that his earlier statements may have given "the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100% before the next need emerges" (p. 69). Maslow (1943, 1954) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and that some needs take precedence over others.

Maslow continued to refine his theory based on the concept of a hierarchy of needs over several decades. In addition to the other five needs, the current eight-tiered model includes cognitive, aesthetic, and transcendent needs. Maslow (1943, 1962, 1987) identified the first need as psychological, which he considers as the main physical requirements for human survival. These needs include food, water, shelter, sex, and sleep. Maslow (1943, 1962, 1987) contended that if these basic needs are unmet, then the others needs will not be considered. The second

need to feel safe includes protection, security, law, order, and stability. The third level of human needs is love and belonging, which are seen to be interpersonal involving feelings of a sense of belonging, friendship, intimacy, trust, and acceptance amongst family, friends, and work.

According to Maslow (1962), humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance among social groups.

Maslow (1962) classified the fourth need (esteem) into two categories. The first category is esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and the second perpetuates into a desire for reputation or respect from others such as status and prestige. Cognitive needs are the fifth level, and it personifies knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, need for meaning, and predictability. Aesthetic needs represent the sixth level and refer to an appreciation and search for beauty, balance, and form. The seventh level is self-actualization, which refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential. Maslow described this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be. Lastly, transcendence is the eighth level, and it is described as motivation by values which excel beyond the personal self, such as mystical experiences, aesthetic experiences, sexual experiences, service to others, the pursuit of science, and spirituality. Garcia-Romeu (2010) equated transcendent with the concept of the desire to reach infinity. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs can provide a basis for comprehending how schools can attain higher levels of job satisfaction by making sure job requirements and working environment meet teachers' needs.

Maslow's (1962) hierarchy of needs theory has made a major contribution to education. Researchers have utilized Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to guide research in various areas within the field of education. Maslow's (1959) hierarchy of needs theory is relevant to this study

as it is associated with job satisfaction among educators teaching middle school in an urban school environment.

Job satisfaction in this context is the extent to which a person's hopes, desires, and expectations about the employment he or she is engaged in are fulfilled (“Job satisfaction,” n.d.). Job satisfaction and motivation are essential to the ongoing development of educational systems. The relevance of job satisfaction and motivation is crucial to the long-term growth of any educational system (Rooney, 2015). There is a correlation between job satisfaction and teacher retention (Houchins, Shippen, & Cattret, 2004), which is a critical issue in K–12 public schools.

Maslow’s theory has informed literature on this topic through many studies. Takaki, Taniguchi, and Fujii (2016) conducted a study that used Maslow’s theory as a framework in the workplace. Results from this study indicated that involvement and tolerance promote greater commitment and lower emotional stress. This study reinforces the third level in Maslow’s theory of having sense of belonging and acceptance in a group.

Dou, Devos, and Valcke (2017) conducted a study by utilizing an instructional leadership approach to show that educational leaders are there to work with their teachers, and teachers who feel valued and respected will likely have increased job satisfaction and higher perceptions of the occupation. According to Maslow, the need for esteem calls for approval, recognition, and respect. Dou et al.’s study was drawn from secondary schools in seven different cities in China. The results of their study indicated that teachers who reported a higher level of school climate as the result of leadership that included collaboration, innovation, and participation had a direct positive effect on their job satisfaction. Participation and collaboration are prescribed in Maslow’s theory in meeting the needs of a sense of belonging. School climate is associated with working conditions as these conditions play an important role in teachers’ job satisfaction.

According to a study conducted by Pogodzinski (2015), novice teacher workload is an important aspect of a school's working conditions due to the stress and job satisfaction experienced by the new teacher. Job satisfaction remains an important entity in education as it defines teachers' behavior and teaching practices, ultimately impacting student achievement (Pogodzinski, 2015).

These studies are important to this research because they reveal how the practices of educators help prepare students. The role of the classroom practitioner is to ensure student achievement for all learners. As this theory applies to job satisfaction it demonstrates the connection between needs being met because of specific motivating factors and job satisfaction. By creating a unique working environment and properly applying the hierarchy of needs theory proposed by Maslow, organizations can meet the first level of the hierarchy pyramid (Upadhyaya, 2014). When all basic needs are satisfied, employees can then begin to feel valued and appreciated by their employer, which leads to further growth as an employee and higher reports of job satisfaction (Udechukwu, 2009). Maslow's categorization of the distinction of needs has offered an extremely valuable foundation for future research (Tyson, 2015). Maslow's theory can be utilized to identify and recognize factors that influence educators who decide to leave the field of education because of job satisfaction. This research can extend this theory by helping educational leaders identify needs that are prevalent in education that may increase job satisfaction for teachers as it seeks to find a relationship with sense of community.

Related Literature

Sense of Community

Sense of community is a concept that has considerable attributes within a vast range of disciplines and practices. For the purpose of this study, sense of community refers to social and physical interaction in an educational setting. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986) sense

of community is a four-aspect theory which includes membership, a perception of belonging, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, support and benefit, and emotional connection and interactions. These components play a pivotal role in the feeling of a sense of community in an educational environment as it reinforces commitment and student outcomes. Research suggests a strong sense of community among teachers will positively impact student achievement. Teachers who are committed to their schools will work harder toward student achievement and school goals (Jones et al., 2013). Teachers are the first line of defense in educating students. The importance of their sense of community is vital to the success of students. Teachers with high sense of community are more likely to stay in their positions, which provides stability to the school community, and work harder to help achieve school goals than teachers with lower sense of community (Jones et al., 2013). A sense of community has also been found to influence organizational outcomes, such as employee engagement, empowerment, job satisfaction, and turnover in a working environment (Boyd, 2014; Boyd & Nowell, 2014). Research shows that there are positive outcomes when teachers develop a sense of community in their schools (Talò, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014).

An absence of a sense of community may have a variety of negative consequences, such as feelings of alienation and psychological distress (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). According to the sense of community theory, if these needs are not met, individuals can experience loneliness or lack of participation. Talò et al. (2014) completed a metanalysis investigating the relationship between sense of community and community participation and noted a significant positive correlation between community participation and sense of community. Findings indicated that those who actively participated were happy and felt like they belonged. As educators work together in the confines of school environments, they build a

community. Sense of community is formed around the confidence that colleagues share the same beliefs and values regarding the mission of the school with a collective responsibility for all students. Thus, a strong sense of community may be an important catalyst for job satisfaction among teachers working in an urban environment.

Components of Sense of Community

Professional learning communities. Education reforms have led to an increase in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) among educators which fosters collaboration (Madrid, 2016). In a traditional educational setting, PLCs often form with a specific purpose that solicits participation and collaboration among educators. In some schools, teachers meet in groups to discuss data, assessments, and develop lesson plans, allowing them opportunities to share successes and challenges in a safe and supportive environment. For example, if a group of science teachers observe that students are struggling with a specific question on an assessment, they can reflect on the different types of instructional strategies they can use to reteach the specific content or even reflect on the previous teaching pedagogies used to originally teach the concept or perhaps evaluate the question to ensure it was address throughout the lessons. These invaluable conversations not only foster a sense of community among teachers but also encourage critical review of instruction and classroom management (Madrid, 2016). Additionally, Madrid (2016) contended that one of the most important benefits of PLCs is that teacher collaboration leads to overall school improvement.

PLCs are extending beyond the confines of brick and mortar because of technology. Hammonds et al. (2013) conducted a study with teachers using Edmodo (a web base learning platform) in which teachers collaborated and shared ideas with other colleagues/members. The findings indicated that teachers developed a strong sense of community through interaction and

common interest. The community of practice in turn assists its participants with becoming more effective practitioners through ongoing professional development achieved due to active collaboration and sharing ideas with other teachers whose interests and needs are similar (Hammonds et al., 2013). These practices influence and encourage positive teaching pedagogies and collaboration while building a sense of community.

McMillan and Chavis (1986) claimed influence to be a bidirectional concept, meaning that for a member to connect to a group, some level of influence must exist over the group's actions. Influence is categorized as the ability for affiliates to stimulate or encourage a group, and vice versa, for a cohesive group to be able to influence members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Group members must have some influence over the group actions and decisions or they may not be motivated to participate; in addition, "cohesiveness is contingent upon a group's ability to influence its members" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 11). At the core of building influence is trust and this includes knowing expectations from members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Additionally, McMillan and Chavis contended that community norms are essential to establishing trust as they create conforming behaviors. In an educational environment, this consensus is created when teachers are inspired, encouraged, and provided supportive academic environments from educational leaders. Nir and Hameiri (2014) contended that teachers' pedagogical proficiency is influenced through school principals' problem-solving capacities, fostering academic climate. For example, when a teacher is observed by an administrator, the expectation is to provide feedback as a means of improving instructional practices. Often administrators are caught up in their daily routines and neglect feedback or follow-up with teachers. This practice could also be perceived as lack of trust from the teacher. However,

feedback and ongoing support promote a sense of community and influence positive outcomes for both teachers and students (Nir & Hameiri, 2014).

Kraft and Papay's (2014) study of the variation in teacher effectiveness and improvement over time indicated that teachers working in supportive professional environments improve their effectiveness, compared to less supportive environments. The results of this study also highlight some of the areas where a supportive academic climate, facilitated by the administrative leadership team, facilitates student achievement. Supportive academic environments such as PLCs influence behaviors that include exchanging ideas and collaboration as they reinforce a sense of community.

Teacher benefits. There are many benefits for teachers who develop a sense of community in their working environment. A high sense of community allows teachers to build relationships and improve their instructional pedagogies. One benefit of sense of community is that teachers build relationships/friendships as they collaborate, which enhances development of professional expertise (Madrid, 2016). Schools need to implement policies and structures that support teachers' willingness to build relationships (Madrid, 2016). As educational leaders set the stage for teaching and learning, they should be cognizant of building a sense of community amongst teachers.

Another way teachers benefit from developing a sense of community is that they expand their effectiveness and resource knowledge through interactions. These interactions foster relationships promoting a sense of belonging. It is equally important that teachers build relationships with students as they become role models for them. As role models, teachers become individuals that children want to imitate, which translates into great influence and more comfort with the student (Drolet & Arcand, 2013). These positive outcomes benefit teachers in

the long run as they become dependent on the next generation. When teachers share these relationships with students, it contributes to the school climate.

School climate. Sense of community is often synonymous with school climate. Within school settings, a sense of community, or school connectedness, is a factor that contributes to a positive school climate (Jones & Davenport, 2018). A school's climate is shaped by existing factors including the school's size, location (rural, suburban, or urban), age of students, and the type of school. Such factors play a role in the students' learning environment and the teachers' working environment, which impact the overall climate of the school (Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014). School climate is also linked to violence. A study conducted by Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, and Wrabel (2016) exposed a link between school climate, school violence, and the school's general academic performance. Findings from this study suggest that a school's overall academic climate was a causal factor in reduction of school violence and improved overall climate perceptions.

Studies also show that there is a link between school climate and student achievement. Jain and Cohen's (2015) study of school climate in California schools found that school climate disparities may have implications for academic disparities: schools with a more positive school climate had less pronounced achievement gaps. Grade levels that experience a climate of high teacher turnover rates also experience lower achievement rates in language arts and math (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Furthermore, researchers have found that school climate enhances or minimizes teacher/staff emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of low personal accomplishment, as well as attrition (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). The National School Climate Center reviewed over 200 studies and concluded that a

school's climate is determined by safety, relationships, teaching and learning, institutional learning, and the school improvement process (Thapa et al., 2013).

Learning environment. Sense of community has also been studied in multiple learning environments. A current growing trend includes online learning platforms in which courses depend heavily on asynchronous communication. This communication is limited and mostly includes communicating through email, with no real time action. Research reveals that sense of community in an online setting is relevant to student success and teachers play a vital role in providing support to students in an online setting (Phirangee, 2016; Phirangee, Demmans Epp, & Hewitt, 2016). However, research suggests that instructor-facilitated online courses have a stronger sense of community than peer-facilitated online courses because of instructors' experiences and pedagogies (Phirangee et al., 2016). Hew (2015) emphasized the importance of instructors' developing and focusing on the social aspects of learning to encourage student interactions and discussion, and thus provide a more comfortable and positive online learning experience.

Nurturing a positive sense of community is important because classroom environments are where teachers and students spend most of their day. This practice benefits students as it fosters an inviting environment where students feel like members as they can contribute to the learning environment. When students' basic needs are met, they are more likely to take academic risks that promote higher order thinking and learning (McKinney, 2017). Teachers benefit greatly when a sense of community exists in the classroom because it fosters positive behavior and builds relationships among the teachers and the students.

Urban school environment. This study explores urban school environments as it examines demographics, student achievement, student behavior, and teachers' perceptions in

working urban school environments. High teacher attrition is a greater problem in U.S. schools that serve predominantly minority and low-income students; as many as 20% of teachers leave high poverty schools every year (Djonko-Moore, 2015). The demographics for large urban districts are typically disproportionate consisting of 90% minority children where most of the students are Black or Latino and growing up in poverty (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Research suggests a school's socioeconomic location and environment affect teachers and their working lives. In urban communities, many new teachers fill in the gaps when other educators desert the schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Hudley, 2013). Urban students are likely to be surrounded by adults with low levels of educational attainment and limited professional prospects—a social context that can have a powerful impact on how students approach school and envision their futures (Schneider, 2017). Additionally, less-experienced teachers are disproportionately concentrated in low-income, high-minority schools as it impacts student achievement (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Many students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds do not experience academic success in reading and math (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Zhang-Wu, 2017). Understanding urban culture in learning environments plays a critical role in closing the achievement gap for minorities and underserved students (Howard, 2010).

Culture. Culture is defined as shared ideologies, philosophies, assumptions, values, attitudes, norms, and expectations that unite members of a community tightly together. While the sense of community resides in the culture and relationships within the school, associations from the surrounding neighborhood may also have an effect (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2007). Students come from a wide variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with

different abilities and family structures, and these interrelated factors are always changing and affecting student outcomes (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

The cultures and languages found in our U.S. public school classrooms have changed greatly over the past several decades (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Culture plays an important role in traditional learning environments that are comprised of diverse students. Emdin (2007) demonstrated the importance of creating a family structure and building communities within the classroom, using culturally relevant strategies like hip-hop music and call-and-response, and connecting the experiences of urban youth to indigenous populations globally. Teachers must possess or acquire the ability to incorporate the cultural capital of urban students in order to bridge the achievement gap (Goldenberg, 2014; Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990).

In the mist of this diversity, teachers must also recognize and embrace this culture, or it could leave them feeling alienated, thus lacking a sense of community. This notion of isolation is a key foundation in Maslow's (1943) hierarchical needs assessment. Teachers must also concern themselves with students' home life and their values as they are shaped by culture. The cultural deficit theory states that some students do poorly in school because the linguistic, social, and cultural nature of the home environment does not prepare them for the work they will be required to do in school. Howard (2010) contends that culture contributes to learning and behavior and that it is important for educators to understand cultural norms, as it personifies a sense of community. For example, certain language or hand gestures could be interpreted as offensive because they go against cultural norms. According to Howard (2010) a number of theories have discussed how culture shapes students, thinking, learning, situational and social cognition. Sarason (1974) acknowledged cultural obstacles, however, and asserted that

individuals should advocate to begin shifting from individualistic goals to building communities. Promoting a culture of classroom community nurtures positive values, respect, and responsibilities (McKinney, 2017).

The critical race theory of education. The dynamics of traditional schools encompass a diverse population of students while raising questions of cultural differences and how they play a role with the relationship between job satisfaction and sense of community among teachers. The gap between teachers' cultural socioeconomic backgrounds and those of their students are widening. The demographics for student-teacher ratio are disproportional. It is reported that teachers in schools across America consist of 80.1% Caucasians, 6.7% African Americans, 8.8% Hispanics, and 4.3% others (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The student demographics comprises of 24.1 million Caucasians, 7.8 million African Americans, 14.0 million Hispanics, 2.6 million Asians, 0.2 million Pacific Islanders, 0.5 million American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 1.6 million students of two or more races (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Cultural differences exist among different ethnic groups as researches used this to explain racial disparities, categorizing it as a part of the critical race theory (CRT). The relevance of CRT in this study is that it helps to expose social imbalance as it relates to sense of community for teachers and students in an urban environment. The CRT is a foundational concept that provides a lens for eradicating social injustice, particularly for funding and placement as it still exists in today's schools. This ideology helps to understand how teachers perceive disadvantaged students, particularly those who are identified as having low socioeconomic status and are linguistically challenged. CRT emphasizes the concept of color blindness, in which individuals consciously or unconsciously ignore differences/cultures as it perpetuates racial inequalities.

CRT is significant to this study because it explains the importance of building a community. Minority students are often seen by teachers as more demanding and belligerent, especially those with lower socioeconomic upbringings (Anyon, 2009). Emdin (2007) revealed that in urban schools, and especially for those teachers who have not had previous experience in urban contexts or with urban youth of color, educators learn “best practices” from “experts” in the field, deemed as such because they have degrees, write articles and meet other criteria that does not have anything to do with their work in urban communities.

Teachers who hold negative, egocentric, and/or racist attitudes towards their students often fail to meet the academic and societal needs of the students they serve (Nadelson et al., 2012). Teachers who are culturally prepared do not see their students as a group of African Americans, Latinos, or poor students (Emdin, 2007). Instead their practices include developing approaches to teaching and learning that work for individuals (Emdin, 2007). Howard (2010) contended that race and culture matter in closing the achievement gap in America’s schools as he challenges educational leaders to develop a culture of racial awareness. Urban schools are often stigmatized as failing schools with limited resources. Efforts to improve school climate and teacher-student relations in disadvantaged communities are important in increasing teachers’ job satisfaction and productivity (Gu & Day, 2014).

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can be a critical issue contributing to teacher shortage. Job satisfaction is defined as an emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job, an affective reaction to one’s job, and an attitude towards one’s job. These feelings can be favorable or unfavorable (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Job satisfaction has been frequently studied in work and organizational environments, often relating it to employee happiness and well-being. These studies have contributed vastly to understanding factors that influence job

satisfaction among educators. Happier teachers and students are related to teachers' job satisfaction (Russel, Williams & Gleason-Gomez, 2010; Tillman & Tillman, 2008). A review of relevant literature shows that educational outcomes correlate positively with teacher job satisfaction. According to past studies, factors including quality of relationship with the supervisors, work goals, self-efficacy, working conditions, and goal support are important determinants of job satisfaction (Badri, Mohaidat, Ferrandino, & El Mourad, 2013). Job satisfaction is considered a strong predictor of overall individual well-being, as well as a good predictor of intentions or decisions of employees to leave a job. Job satisfaction is related to positive effect, self-efficacy, working conditions, and work goals (Van den Berghe et al., 2014). Bakotica (2016) and Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel, and LeBreton (2012) contended that job satisfaction itself remains a complex concept in which employees experience many internal and external factors that can increase or decrease satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is significant to this study because it serves as a criterion for sense of community among middle school teachers in an urban environment. Maslow's (1959) hierarchy of needs theory provides a framework to illustrate how specific needs must be met to satisfy individuals, linking it to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is important because research shows how it is associated with motivation and working conditions. Scholars on the theories of motivation and job satisfaction argue that motivated and satisfied employees tend to be more committed (Khumalo, 2015, p. 42).

Coworkers. People with a high need for affiliation desire positive relationships with others (McClelland, 1962). Teachers may find it discouraging to be in the company of colleagues who are unsupportive or inconsistent in their attitudes and behavior. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) illustrates how affiliation is an essential part of filling

individual needs in an organization. Flinders (1988) defined teacher isolation from two perspectives: (1) a lack of opportunities to interact with colleagues and (2) a psychological state related to how teachers perceive and experience collegial interaction ((Hedberg, 1981). In the first perspective teachers are often confined to their classrooms as they are governed by routines and schedules established by the principal. These schedules often allow teachers a planning period in which they may choose to grade papers, call parents, set up for the next class or perhaps take a few minutes to regroup and regenerate for the rest of the day. In the second perspective, teachers experience alienation when they isolate themselves from other colleagues intentionally or unintentionally. These isolations can be attributed to personal beliefs, affiliation, school culture, or even teacher status. On the other hand, there are teachers who build relations with different cliques, often gaining a sense of affiliation. It is important for colleagues to build relationships that often result in positive outcomes such as sharing ideas, peer coaching, and improving teacher's efficacy (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikhahmadi, 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that administrators should find creative ways in their schedules to maximize professional development that builds upon teacher interaction as this fosters job satisfaction.

Students and parents. Teachers encounter a wide range of students with different backgrounds, behaviors, personalities, and academic needs (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016). Research supports that job satisfaction may be based on relationships with students. When teachers foster positive relationships with students, they are more inclined to motivate and engage students academically and socially (McCoy, Wolf, & Godfrey, 2014). Both teacher and students benefit from these positive relationships as they promote a sense of belonging and impact student achievement, which is associated with job satisfaction. However, the demands for forming these positive relationships are most needed for minority students and those from

low socioeconomic backgrounds who are often confronted with academic failure and higher discipline issues (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). Additionally, these teachers spend a great deal of their time disciplining urban students rather than teaching, which impacts student achievement (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016).

Parental involvement also plays a vital role in children's academic success as it leads to improved student attitudes, attendance, students feeling safe in the school, and lower discipline rates (Al-Alwain, 2014). Parents who live in resource-deprived communities are less likely to be involved with home-school relations because of the lack of social capital and work-related constraints (Richardson, Brown, & Van Brakle, 2013). The National Education Association (2016) reported that children have better social skills and improved behavior when high parental involvement exists, regardless of ethnicity or social status. Research suggests the importance of parental involvement because of its impact on academic success and classroom environments, thus, creating less stress for teachers.

Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction

Stress. Today's educational landscape finds schools across the nation dealing with limited funding, diverse learners, increased responsibilities, and public scrutiny. Teachers feel overwhelmed and stressed by the challenges of day-to-day operations and high demands from parents, administrators, and stakeholders. As stress among teachers increases, it leads to the decline of their job performance, consequently affecting the quality of service given to the students (Boujut, Dean, Grouelle, & Cappe, 2016; von der Embse, Sandilos, Pendergast, & Mankin, 2016).

Policies and procedures are also attributed to high stress levels many teachers encounter. Teachers are held accountable for enforcing state, district, and school policies and procedures as

a contractual agreement. Non-compliance can lead to litigation or loss of job. The issue of teacher burnout has steadily increased since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act of 2004 (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Harrington, 2014). These demands hold teachers accountable for what teachers teach, what students learn in an academic year, and make provisions for all learners regardless of their disability. It is these types of demands that can result in negative consequences that often lead to higher levels of burnout and lower levels of job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017b).

Motivation. Frederick Herzberg's two factor theory, also called motivation hygiene theory, proposed that intrinsic factors are related to job satisfaction while extrinsic factors are associated with job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Intrinsic factors for the educator include teacher autonomy or teacher leadership positions. Extrinsic factors include individual rewards and recognition. It is essential for organizations to recognize employee work efforts in order to improve performance and motivation because recognition promotes acknowledgment and appreciation of employee achievement (Dou et al., 2017). These rewards and recognitions are part of the sense of community as they reinforce the construct of social influences. Employee motivation and performance are important human factors that determine skills and efforts required to promote institutional innovation and organizational success (Berumen, Pérez-Megino, & Ibarra, 2016). Educators, in turn, need specific skills of teaching pedagogies to promote student achievement. While motivation and job satisfaction are closely linked, motivation includes a behavioral component regarding individual needs that are based on values and personality (Nahavandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2015). For example, if teachers are motivated, they are likely to provide meaningful learning experiences in which students can

think critically instead of recalling information demonstrating low levels of cognition. The formulation of sense of community among educational stakeholders includes creating a teacher-student bond to increase student motivation, communicate a message of hope for “at risk” students, promote positive relationships and goals, and provide psychological identity with others (Jones & Davenport, 2018).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Salary, fringe benefits, school safety, building-level support, and job security are extrinsic factors affecting job satisfaction. Additionally, these rewards can increase teacher attrition if teachers are dissatisfied or decrease attrition rates if teachers are satisfied with their jobs. Research shows that extrinsic factors have less of an impact on job satisfaction than intrinsic factors. Rooney (2015) presents an example of intrinsic reward in which teachers who remain in high poverty schools may have a moral obligation or a sense of moral reward and are therefore likely to stay. On the other hand, those who are in working conditions that do not align with their beliefs about teaching and learning are less likely to stay (Rooney, 2015).

Teacher efficacy. Teachers’ self-efficacy is the ability of obtaining desired outcomes from students through motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). This cognitive concept validates the relationship of job satisfaction among teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017a). Dicke et al. (2014) conducted a study that reveals teachers’ self-efficacy is associated with student performance in the classroom. This study showed how pre-service professional learning better prepares teachers and increases their self-confidence to help students succeed. Recent studies show that there are positive outcomes for high levels of teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are innovative and exhibit greater levels of planning, implementation, and creating an engaging learning environment. These

teachers tend to expand their teaching pedagogies to experiment with varied instructional strategies and have clear goals on how to positively impact academic achievement (Moulding, Stewart, & Dunmeyer, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2014). Research also suggest that teachers with high levels of teacher efficacy increase critical thinking skills for students, raising achievement levels (Demirdag, 2015).

The study by Akomolafe and Ogunmakin (2014) revealed a significant relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The authors found that self-efficacy ultimately determines how an individual behaves, thinks, and becomes motivated to be involved in a task. Consequently, individuals with high self-efficacy tend to behave more positively, think more creatively which also interacts with motivation. Additionally, higher levels of self-efficacy lead to higher satisfaction, therefore, increasing the desire to continue with the teaching profession (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). On the other hand, low levels of teacher self-efficacy may inhibit the level of achievement for students and teachers (Battersby & Cave, 2014). Research suggests the importance of teachers having high self-efficacy as it relates to job satisfaction and student achievement (Akomolafe & Ogunmakin, 2014).

Working conditions. Public scrutiny, limited resources, diverse learners, increased responsibility, and working conditions describe today's educational landscape that contributes to teacher attrition. Poor working conditions common in America's neediest schools explains the relationship between student characteristics and teacher retention (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Marinette (2017) conducted a study examining the relationship between working conditions and teachers' attrition in secondary schools. The study's findings revealed that working conditions such as low salary, poor working environment, lack of job satisfaction, and poor principal leadership style contribute greatly to teacher attrition.

Working conditions also include the physical building. As funds are allocated by the federal, state, and local government, local school districts present annual budgets which include remodeling and upgrades to individual schools. All schools are not equipped the same way; therefore, some schools would be appealing to work in while others are less attractive. Teachers spend eight or more hours a day in poor and deplorable working conditions often contributing to teachers' levels of job dissatisfaction. Ohide and Mbogo (2017) conducted a study that examined the impact of working conditions on teacher's job satisfaction and performance in the private primary schools in Yei Town, South Sudan. The findings indicate that the inadequacy of school facilities led to teachers' dissatisfaction with their job. Additionally, Marinette (2017) reported that outdated and dilapidated facilities did not support a conducive or safe learning environment. Safety is a basic need within the hierarchy of needs theory stipulated by Maslow (1943). When the basic needs of teachers are not met, achieving job satisfaction, retention and professionalism may be difficult in some situations and unattainable in others (Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, & August, 2012). Supportive school workplace conditions can enhance teacher quality, enable teachers to teach more effectively, and improve retention. Working conditions also include having adequate and appropriate resources to teach. Adequate resources are needed to provide meaningful learning opportunities that help students reach their highest level of academic success.

Furthermore, research shows that working conditions in urban and high poverty schools contribute to higher attrition rates. Many teachers leave high poverty schools because of poor working conditions (Johnson & Simon, 2013). High attrition rates in schools that serve underprivileged and minority learners are almost double those in low poverty schools (McLaurin, Smith, & Smillie, 2009). Borman and Dowling (2008) reported that urban schools

and a high percentage of minority learners find it difficult to retain teachers because the teachers left whenever a more attractive opportunity presented itself. Teachers need reasonable teaching loads, appropriate class sizes, and good working conditions in order to teach most effectively and remain in classrooms. Employees value work relationships and healthy working conditions the most when it comes to job satisfaction (Panigrahi, 2016). Student learning is limited when teachers do not have satisfactory working conditions.

Administrative support. The leadership style of administration also influences a teacher's decision to remain in the teaching profession. Research shows that there is a positive correlation for the level of support and training that administrators offer novice teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Urick (2016) contended that the type of leadership often dictates if teachers are satisfied with their job, and it is a determining factor if they stay or leave. Teachers are inclined to stay with leaders who build a positive teacher environment. Leaders who cultivate a positive teaching environment develop a collaborative teacher relationship. These relationships must include a variety of ways to communicate such as open forms, discussion, collaborative meetings, and feedback from evaluations (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2014). Teachers feel more empowered and committed to their positions with leaders who are transparent, promote positive climates that includes communicating vision, sharing decisions, and developing supportive professional development (Urick, 2016). Additionally, shared instructional leadership has been included in numerous effective school reports as a leading contribution for positive outcomes for teachers and principals (Urick & Bowers, 2014). These research studies suggest that there needs to be more training and support for educational leaders so that they can cultivate positive working communities in their buildings.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) presented five practices of exemplary leadership: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enables Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. These five practices outline successful behaviors and practices of effective leaders who create high-performing teams and promotes a high degree of involvement in their schools. These authors contended that leadership is a relationship that must be cultivated with mutual respect and trust. A strong leadership can make or break a school as it is the binding force for producing desired results (Sayadi, 2016).

Factors Affected by Job Satisfaction

Teacher retention/turnover. There is a growing shortage of teachers that is threatening the nation (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). It is estimated that the United States will have more than two million job openings between 2014 and 2024 for teachers at all levels (Chen, 2017). Teachers have the greatest direct impact on student learning; therefore, it is imperative to consider factors that increase turnover rates among educators. Effectively retaining teachers is crucial to making sure there are enough well-prepared and committed educators. It is important to explore factors that contribute to the exponential rate of teacher attrition as it relates to job satisfaction.

Chowwen, Balogun, and Olowokere (2014) contended that there is a predictive relationship that exists between teacher attrition and job satisfaction. The NCLB has constantly increased levels of accountability and standardized testing, arguably forcing many teachers to change positions within the field of education or, more drastically, leave the profession altogether. A 2014 survey of 1,500 PK–12 teachers conducted by the National Education Association (NEA) revealed that while 75% of teachers were satisfied with their jobs, nearly half (45%) indicated that they had considered quitting the profession due to the increased emphasis on standardized testing (Walker, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics conducted

a study with nationally representative samples and noted that since the early 1970s, both elementary and secondary schools have been experiencing relatively high rates of attrition compared to other traditionally respected professions such as engineering, architecture, and law (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). Teacher job satisfaction is important to educational reform. If teachers continue to leave the classrooms, this could be detrimental to the educational system. Educational leaders must reevaluate factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction as it impacts student achievement.

Additionally, there is a notable trend of educators leaving the field after teaching large populations of students with low socioeconomic status, particularly ethnic minorities and those facing learning difficulties (Dupriez et al., 2016). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) conducted a study and results indicate that schools with high-poverty, high-minority, urban and rural schools will suffer the most. Schools with students from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely to be poor performers when comparing them to advantaged peers (Charalambous, Creemers, & Kyriakides, 2015).

Student achievement. Job satisfaction is critical for schools to meet the academic needs of their students. Existing literature finds that teacher turnover negatively influences student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teachers' job satisfaction is extremely important to make teaching and learning processes more effective. The shortage challenges teacher quality while district personnel create innovative ways to attract nontraditional educators to the field. However, nontraditional teachers lack content knowledge and teaching pedagogies, experiences that often drives student success (Rodriguez et al., 2014). Often teachers' autonomy to teach is taken away as they are governed by high-stakes assessments and time constraints. Furthermore, students' success is measured by high-stakes standardized assessment that typically capture only

one way of learning. In addition, these assessments are used to rank the performances of schools, often creating public scrutiny for low performing schools. However, these assessments can be used to develop school-wide goals to improve student achievement. Academic achievement is impacted when stakeholders establish academic values and goals (Allen, 2015).

Summary

The sense of community theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provide a framework for this study. These theories focused on the constructs of sense of community and job satisfaction in an educational setting. This study sought to find if there was a relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction among middle school teachers in an urban population. The literature review addressed components of this problem to compare relevant research findings. The literature shows a relationship exists between sense of community and influence, motivation, school climate, learning environment and culture. As job satisfaction was reviewed, the literature showed a relationship among job satisfaction and motivation, self-efficacy, working conditions, job performance, administration support, and teacher retention. However, little research is available to support the relationship between job satisfaction and sense of community, particularly for middle school teachers in an urban population. Further research should be conducted to investigate the correlation among these various factors in order to widen the field of research of middle school teachers in an urban population to support the growth of student achievement for all students.

Most existing sense of community research supports the positive relationship between community and school reform, social capital, student performance, social acceptance, well-being, reduction in alienation, and increased coping skills (Royal & Rossi, 1996; Carrington & Robinson, 2006). These positive relationships also connect to job satisfaction as it relates to

teacher retention when individual needs are met. Dissatisfied or unhappy employees become discouraged, resulting in burnout. This research study addressed specific gaps in the literature on supporting teachers as they are tasked with improving student achievement in high demanding environments that may not promote a sense of community to decrease high teacher attrition.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between two variables. The researcher sought to find a predictive relationship between teacher's job satisfaction and sense of community among middle school teachers working in an urban school district. The criterion variable for this study was job satisfaction and the predictor variable was sense of community. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), this is the best design because a correlational design will determine the relationship between a set of independent variables and a dependent variable. Chapter Three includes a description of the design of the study, data collection procedures, instrumentation, participant information, and data analysis procedures.

Design

This study employs a quantitative correlational research design. The quantitative method can promote unbiased results through the use of closed-ended questions. Correlational research attempts to discover relationships between variables by implementing correlational statistics (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). A non-experimental form of research is the correlational design in which investigators use the correlational statistic to describe and measure the degree, association, or relationship between two or more variables or sets of scores (Creswell, 2014). This research uses a correlational research design to determine if there is a predictive relationship between teacher job satisfaction and a sense of community among middle school teachers in an urban school district.

Correlation is a bivariate exploration that assesses the strengths of connection between two variables and the direction of the relationship without manipulating either variable (Salkind, 2013). This method allows the researcher to identify whether variables tend to move in the same

or opposite direction when they change. The correlational design is useful for enhancing understanding about phenomena in educational settings (Martella, Nelson, Morgan, & Marchand-Martella, 2013). The researcher determined that a correlation design is most appropriate for this study because it focuses on the possible direction and strength of two variables (Gall et al., 2007). Sense of community, the predictor variable, is defined as “a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 124). Job satisfaction, the criterion variable, refers to an effective and positive job-related reaction to the workplace (Worrell et al., 2006).

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a predictive relationship between teachers’ job satisfaction and sense of community among middle school teachers in an urban school district?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis for this study is as follows:

H₀: There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between teachers’ job satisfaction as measured by the Job Satisfaction Scale and sense of community, as measured by the Sense of Community Index, among middle school teachers in an urban school district.

Participants and Setting

The participants for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of middle school teachers from an urban school district located in northeastern Georgia during the spring semester of the 2019–2020 academic year. Convenience sampling was used for this research, based upon job site and the size of the school district. This sampling method was chosen because of availability of respondents and ease of access. This method is less random than other sampling methods but is still considered an option (Creswell, 2014). The participants were chosen from a

school district comprising of 55 schools, including two alternative settings. Eight schools of the 55 were chosen for this study because they were traditional middle schools within the district; however only five schools agreed to participate. The researcher contacted each principal from the eight schools to inform them of the study and seek permission to conduct the study in their respective buildings. The study was voluntarily, and it consists of a three-part survey: demographic section, Sense of Community questionnaire and Job Satisfaction questionnaire. The researcher then sent out a group email to each teacher explaining the study and procedures. The researcher then follow up a few days later by emailing the survey including the consent form as the first page to each teacher using group email.

The schools in this district are located in a metropolitan city in northeast Georgia. According to The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) the total population for this historical metropolitan city is 137,002. The number of people living below the poverty line in the county is 25.4%, which is above Georgia's state average of 14.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These numbers translate to 46.2 million Americans, making Georgia the third highest poverty rate among states (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Additionally, the demographics of the county consist of 36.7% Caucasians, 54.2% African Americans, 2.2% Hispanics, 5.2% Asians, and 1.7% others (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The school district is classified as urban public and is the 11th largest public-school district in the state of Georgia, consisting of 55 schools and eight educational centers. The current enrollment for this district is 38,100 students in Grades pre-K–12, with nearly 2,800 teachers (Ga DOE, 2018). The student demographics for the district include 58% African Americans, 28% Caucasians, 7% Hispanics, 2% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 5% Other (Ga DOE, 2018). There are 11 high schools, eight middle schools, eight K–8 schools, 23 elementary schools, five charter schools, and eight other educational centers including

alternative education.

The district upholds a Title I status because of its socioeconomic challenges where 64% of the students receive free and reduced lunch (Ga DOE, 2018). Title I provides federal funding through the Georgia Department of Education to local educational agencies and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards (Ga DOE, 2018).

The number of participants that were sampled in this research was 113, which exceeded the required minimum for a medium effect size. According to Warner (2013), for regression analysis, the number of participants needed is calculated by $N > 104 + k$, where k = number of predictor variables. Therefore, for this study, the sample size had to be at least 106 since, $N > 104 + 1$, $N > 105$.

The convenient sample of teachers came from five different middle schools within the district. Teachers volunteered to take an online survey emailed by the researcher. Creswell (2014) noted that survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population: “From the sample results, the research generalizes or makes claims about the population” (p. 145).

There were nine males and 104 female teachers that participated in this study. The age of the participants ranged from 21 to 61 years. Years of teaching experiences also varied from 0–26 or more years of educational experiences. The teachers in this study also held various levels of educational degrees including 36 bachelors, 57 masters, 15 specialist degrees, and five doctoral degrees. For the purpose of this study, teacher is defined as a person holding a valid Georgia teaching certificate with at least a bachelor’s degree in at least one content area such as

math, science, social studies, English Language Arts (ELA), music, band, dance, or art (Ga DOE, 2018). The teachers that participated in this survey are educators who are classified as full-time certified classroom teachers indicating they work at least eight hours with the majority of it spent with students for 190 days for the academic year.

Instrumentation

Sense of Community Index -2

This quantitative, nonexperimental, correlational study utilized two Likert-type scale survey instruments to measure sense of community and employee job satisfaction. The Sense of Community Index-2 (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) is the first instrument used in this research to measure the predictive variable sense of community. The purpose of this instrument is to measure sense of community within social settings (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008). Permission was granted to use this instrument for this research (see Appendix B). The SCI-2 has been used globally as a predictor of behavior in numerous studies (Abfalter, Zaglia, & Mueller, 2012; Phipps, Copper, Shores, Williams & Mize 2015; Warner & Leierer, 2015). This instrument was developed based on a theory of sense of community presented by McMillan and Chavis (1986). The SCI-2 was derived from an original version called the SCI that encompasses a perception of four elements including membership, influence, meeting needs, and a shared emotional connection.

The original version had a 12-item scale including a true–false response that limited variability and concerned critics (Chavis et al., 2008). The reliability of the original version revealed an alpha coefficient of .97; however, numerous further studies yielded inconsistent reliability within the four subscales (Chavis et al., 2008; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Validity was achieved through the pilot study, specifically within the instrument’s correlation with life

satisfaction at .320, social and community participation at .381, and civic participation at .315 with $p \leq .01$ for each correlation (Chavis et al., 2008). The SCI-2 contains 24-item questions with no true–false sets. The SCI-2 was revised and used within a larger survey of 1800 people (Chavis et al., 2008). The SCI-2 is based on a theory of sense of community presented by McMillan and Chavis (1986). Results of prior studies have demonstrated that the SCI-2 has been a strong predictor of measuring behaviors (such as participation) and although it was concluded to be valid, reliability tended to be inconsistent and generally low (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Glynn, 1981; Obst & White, 2004; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006).

The Sense of Community Index (SCI) is the most frequently used quantitative measure of sense of community in the social sciences covering different cultures and many contexts such as workplace, school settings, urban, suburban, and rural communities. According to Chavis et al. (2008), the analysis of the SCI-2 showed that it is a very reliable measure (coefficient alpha = .94). The subscales also proved to be reliable with coefficient alpha scores of .79 to .86 (Chavis et al., 2008). The SCI-2 uses a four-point Likert scale with the following ratings: 1 = *I am not a part of the community*, 2 = *I am somewhat a part of the community*, 3 = *I am mostly a part of the community*, 4 = *I am completely a part of the community*. The combined possible score on the SCI-2 ranges from 24 to 96 points. A score of 24 points is the lowest possible score and means that participants feel they are not a part of their community. A score of 96 points is the highest possible score and means that participants feel they are completely part of their community.

The overall scores are derived from the subscales. Each subscale is scored and then added together for a single score. The subscale score was calculated utilizing the 1 to 4 scale for each question of the survey. The approximate time to complete this portion of the survey was five minutes.

Job Satisfaction Survey

The Job Satisfaction Scale (Spector, 1985) is the second instrument used in this research to measure the criterion variable of job satisfaction. This instrument will be combined with a demographic section and the SCI-2 survey to create one online instrument. The purpose of the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) is to measure job satisfaction specifically for human service, public, and non-public sector organizations; however, it is widely used in other organizations (Spector, 1985). During the late 1970s, interest grew in human service worker's job satisfaction and its causes (Cherniss & Egnatios, 1978; Marlowe & Spector, 1983; Zaharia & Baumeister, 1979). The JSS was developed by Paul Spector in 1985 to address the need for an instrument to measure job satisfaction of workers in human services. This instrument was developed because most existing scales were developed for other types of organizations, and items were not directly applicable to human services (Spector, 1985). The development of the JSS was predicated on the theoretical stance that job satisfaction embodies an affective or attitudinal reaction to a job (Spector, 1985). In current research, job satisfaction is assumed to represent a cluster of feelings about the job; the JSS was designed to measure them individually and to give an overall attitude score as a combination of individual facets (Spector, 1985).

The original version of JSS consists of 35 items with six different dimensions including satisfaction with all colleagues, satisfaction with co-workers, satisfaction with management, satisfaction with parents, satisfaction with students' behavior, and responsibility. The current model is derived from that initial version of the questionnaire, a series of exploratory and confirmatory analyses that were conducted on data from local samples, with a view to making the JSS measurement model more robust, reliable, and compact (Pepe, Addimando, & Veronese, 2017).

The JSS is a nine-subscale questionnaire that aims at measuring job satisfaction. This instrument is reliable as it was used in numerous studies to evaluate job satisfaction (Batura, Skordis-Worrall, Tapa, Basnyat, & Morrison, 2016; Malik, Chishti, & Shahzad, 2016; Rosales, Labrague & Rosales, 2013). An overall average of 0.70 for internal consistency was obtained out of a sample of 3,067 individuals over an 18-month time period and an internal consistency of 0.37–0.74 was calculated for a smaller sample of 43 workers (Blau, 1999). This instrument is reliable with Cronbach's alpha values and confidence intervals scores were as follows: $\alpha = .794$, 95% CI [.781, .807] (Feldt, 1965). Studies using various scales for job satisfaction on a single employee supported validity (Schmidt, 2004; Wetherell, 2002).

Permission was granted from the developer to use the JSS for this research (see Appendix C). The JSS has a total of 36 questions broken down into nine subscales separated into three dimensions: satisfaction with co-workers (three items), satisfaction with parents (three items) and satisfaction with students' behaviors (three items). This instrument uses a six-point Likert scale with the following ratings: 1 = *I disagree very much with the aspect of this job*, 2 = *I disagree moderately with the aspect of this job*, 3 = *I disagree slightly with the aspect of this job*, 4 = *I agree slightly with the aspect of this job*, 5 = *I agree moderately with the aspect of this job* and 6 = *I agree very much with the aspect of this job*. Scores on each of the nine facet subscales, based on four items each, can range from 4 to 24; scores of 4 to 12 are dissatisfied, 16 to 24 are satisfied, and 12 and 16 are indecisive. The combined possible score on the JSS ranges from 36 to 216 points. A score of 36 points is the lowest possible score and means that teachers are not satisfied with their jobs. A score of 216 points is the highest possible score and means that teachers are highly satisfied with their jobs. High scores on the scale represent job satisfaction, so the scores on the negatively worded items must be reversed before summing with the

positively worded into facet or total scores. A score of 6 representing strongest agreement with a negatively worded item is considered equivalent to a score of one representing strongest disagreement on a positively worded item, allowing them to be combined meaningfully (Spector, 1985). The subscales were added to give a possible score of 216. A score of 36 to 108 indicates dissatisfaction, 144 to 216 indicates satisfaction, and 108 to 144 indicates indecisiveness. Scoring was computed through the survey and documented by the researcher. The approximate time to complete this part of the survey was five minutes.

Procedures

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the Liberty Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix A for IRB approval). Upon approval, the researcher sent a letter to the eight principals informing them of district approval, providing a summary of the research, and requesting consent to conduct the research at their school. The researcher then obtained a list of teacher group emails for each middle school from the district's website. The researcher sent out a group email with details of the study to each teacher. One week later another email containing the link to the survey was sent out, explaining the details of the survey. Within this email, teachers were asked to click on the link to a Google Form. Once teachers click on the link, a consent form appeared first. If participants agreed to participate, they were prompted to click "start" as acknowledgement of consent. The succeeding pages were combined into one survey and consisted of three parts: demographics survey, job satisfaction survey, and sense of community survey. The demographic information includes age, gender, total number of years teaching, and types of degree obtained. Once this information was completed, teachers were prompted to click "Next" to complete part two (job satisfaction) and then click "Next" to complete part three of the survey (sense of community). Upon completion, participants were

prompted to click “Submit.” Two weeks following the initial survey, another email with the link was sent out to solicit non-participants. A final email was sent out a week later thanking those who participated and making an attempt to solicit non-participants. After collection, data were analyzed to determine if there was a relationship between teacher’s job satisfaction and sense of community among middle school teachers. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

Data Analysis

Bivariate linear regression was the primary data analysis method for this study. A linear regression was used because it can help to determine how and to what extent the criterion variable varies as a function of changes in the predictor variable (Gall et al., 2007). A linear regression analysis provides an equation that predicts raw scores on a quantitative *Y* variable from raw scores on an *X* variable; therefore, continuous data from both scales were used (Warner, 2013, p. 338). Furthermore, it provides statistical significance of relationships between variables. In this study, the criterion variable was job satisfaction and the predictor variable was sense of community.

Descriptive statistics were reported including mean, standard deviation, number, and range values on an interval scale (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2012). Three assumptions related to the study data needed to be met before bivariate regression was utilized to analyze data (Martella et al., 2013). A scatterplot between the predictor variable and criterion variable was used to test these assumptions.

The following are the assumptions for bivariate regression studies (Warner, 2013, p. 342):

(a) The first assumption is the Assumption of Bivariate Outliers. The assumption of bivariate outliers used a scatter plot between the predictor variable (sense of community) and criterion variables (teacher job satisfaction) to look for extreme bivariate outliers.

(b) The second assumption is Linearity: This assumption assumes the relationship between the two variables is linear. Linearity was tested using a scatterplot between the predictor variable (sense of community) and criterion variable (teacher job satisfaction). A roughly straight line (no curve) indicates that the assumption is tenable.

(c) To validate the third assumption, the Assumption of Bivariate Normal Distribution was used. A scatterplot was used to evaluate the homoscedasticity of the distributions. This assumption assumes that the variability in scores in both variables should be similar. A “cigar shaped” plot of the predictor variable (sense of community) and criterion variable (teacher job satisfaction) indicated that the assumption is tenable.

A statistical analysis was run at a 95% confidence interval level and alpha level was set at $p < .05$. A bivariate regression analysis reported degrees of freedom (df), r and r^2 , F-value (F), significance level (p), B, beta, and SE B, regression equation, and power (Warner, 2013). Once the desired number of surveys were completed, the results were downloaded into Excel and SPSS version 20 for analysis. All demographic data were presented on charts and graphs for comparison and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Four includes the descriptive statistics, demographic information, and results of the inferential statistics. Data screening and assumptions tests are addressed.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a predictive relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and sense of community among middle school teachers in an urban school district?

Null Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, as measured by the Job Satisfaction Scale, and sense of community, as measured by the Sense of Community Index, among middle school teachers in an urban school district.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations, were calculated for the predictor and criterion variables. A total of 113 participants were included in the study. Among the 113 participants, 57 participants had master's degrees (50.4%), 36 participants had bachelor's degrees (31.9%), 15 participants were educational specialists (13.3%), and five participants had doctoral degrees (4.4%). Participants were asked about their years of experience. The responses of participants were classified into six categories. Approximately 31.9% of participants had 11 to 15 years of experience ($n = 36$), 22.1% of participants had 0 to 5 years of experience ($n = 25$), and 14.2% of participants had 26 or more years of experience ($n = 16$). Most participants identified as females ($n = 104$; 92%). In terms of age, 17 participants identified themselves as 21 to 30 years old (15.0%), 43 participants identified as 31 to 40 years

old (38.1%), 32 participants as 41 to 50 years old (28.3%), 14 participants as 51 to 60 years old (12.4%), and seven participants as 61 years old or older (6.2%).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Characteristics (N = 113)

		Frequency	Percent
Highest degree attained	Bachelor	36	31.9
	Doctoral	5	4.4
	Educational specialist	15	13.3
	Master	57	50.4
	Total	113	100.0
Years of experience	0 to 5	25	22.1
	6 to 10	12	10.6
	11 to 15	36	31.9
	16 to 20	12	10.6
	21 to 25	12	10.6
	26 or more	16	14.2
	Total	113	100.0
Gender	Male	9	8.0
	Female	104	92.0
	Total	113	100.0
Age	21 to 30	17	15.0
	31 to 40	43	38.1
	41 to 50	32	28.3
	51 to 60	14	12.4
	61 or above	7	6.2
Total	113	100.0	

The study variables in this research included the sense of community and job satisfaction variables. The sense of community variable was measured using the Sense of Community Index - 2 (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), and the job satisfaction variable was measured using the Job Satisfaction Scale (Spector, 1985). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables. The sense of community variable ranged from 24 to 96, with a mean of 65.79 ($SD = 14.753$). The job satisfaction variable ranged from 72 to 166, with a mean of 125.19 ($SD = 16.155$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Sense of Community and Job Satisfaction Variables (N = 113)

	<i>N</i>	Min. score	Max. score	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sense of community	113	24	96	65.79	14.753
Job satisfaction	113	72	166	125.19	16.155

Results

H: There is a statistically significant predictive relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, as measured by the Job Satisfaction Scale, and sense of community, as measured by the Sense of Community Index, among middle school teachers in an urban school district. Figure 1 presents a scatterplot of the predictor and the criterion variables to test the assumptions of bivariate linear regression. A visual inspection of the scatterplot in Figure 1 shows that the assumptions of no bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate normal distribution are tenable.

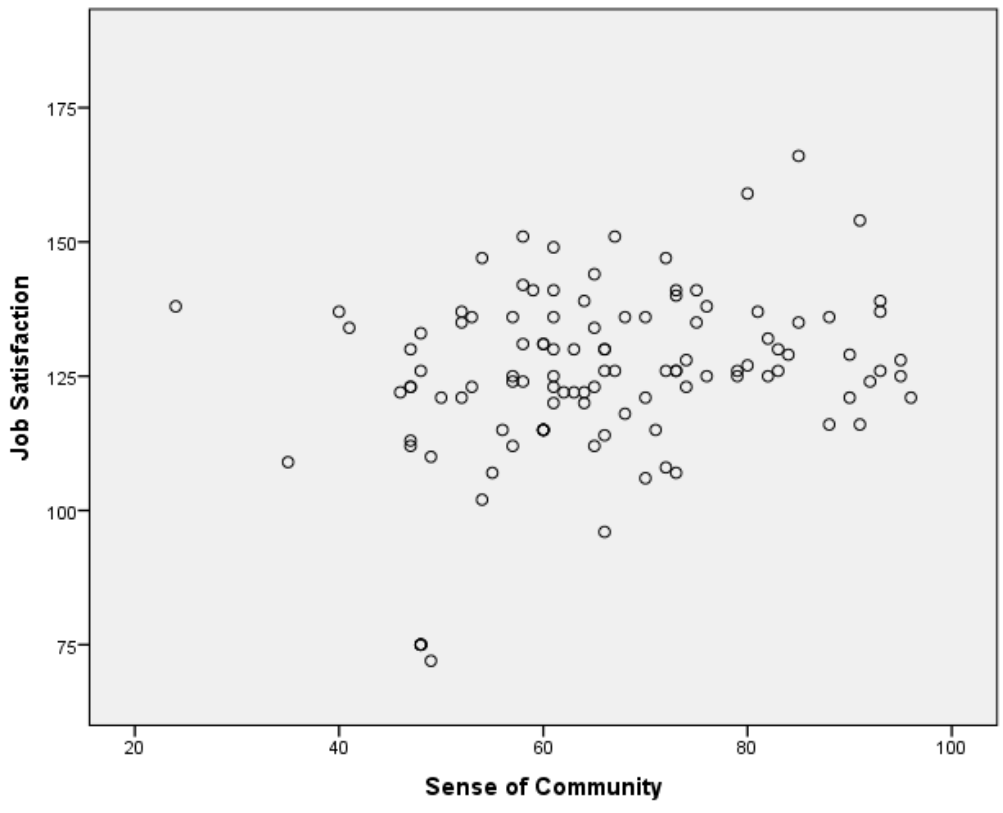


Figure 1. Scatterplot of job satisfaction and sense of community.

A bivariate linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the sense of community variable would predict the job satisfaction variable. Table 3 presents the test for the significance of the regression model. The result showed that the regression model was significant in predicting the dependent variable of job satisfaction, $F(1,112) = 9.914, p = .002$.

Table 3

ANOVA Test for Model

Model ^a	Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1 Regression	2396.633	1	2396.633	9.914	.002 ^b
Residual	26834.465	111	241.752		
Total	29231.097	112			

^aDependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

^bPredictors: (Constant), Sense of Community

Table 4 presents the results of the bivariate linear regression analysis. The results showed that a sense of community significantly predicted the job satisfaction of participants ($B = .314, p = .002$). The model also indicated an explanation for 7.4% of the variance in job satisfaction. The positive coefficient showed a positive relationship between sense of community and job satisfaction. This finding indicated that a high sense of community also resulted in high job satisfaction among participants. Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis posed in the study, which stated that there was no statistically significant predictive relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, as measured by the Job Satisfaction Scale, and sense of community, as measured by the Sense of Community Index, among middle school teachers in an urban school district.

Table 4

Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis Results

Model ^a	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
1 (Constant)	104.558	6.713		15.576	.000
Sense of community	.314	.1	.286	3.149	.002

^aDependent variable: Job Satisfaction; $R^2 = .286$; Adjusted $R^2 = .074$

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

In this chapter, the significance of the findings from Chapter Four is discussed. There was sufficient evidence to determine a predictive relationship between a teacher's sense of community and job satisfaction; therefore, one should examine the factors that would likely contribute to this relationship based on the theoretical framework and reviewed literature. Similarities and differences between the results identified in this study and those shared in others are analyzed to create a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Then, the implications of these findings for future research and policy development are offered. Next, the possible limitations of the study are given, tempering the significance of the findings, and leading to the chapter's next discussion of recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This researcher sought to identify whether a sense of community among middle school teachers within urban school districts was predictive of their levels of job satisfaction. The researcher focused on the following research question: Is there a predictive relationship between teacher's job satisfaction and sense of community among middle school teachers in an urban school district? This question was answered using a convenience sample of middle school teachers across 55 schools within northeastern Georgia's urban school district during the spring semester. Participants answered a three-part survey that included questions on their demographics, a sense of community questionnaire, and a job satisfaction questionnaire. Using linear regression as the primary data analysis method and a significance level of .05, the researcher found that a sense of community significantly predicted the job satisfaction of the participants.

These results matched the anticipated expectations based on the literature review and given theoretical framework. Hence, it was possible to reject the null hypothesis (H_0): There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, as measured by the Job Satisfaction Scale, and sense of community, as measured by the Sense of Community Index, among middle school teachers in an urban school district.

Numerous researchers have previously identified a significant association between teachers' sense of community and their job satisfaction levels. In general, research has indicated that teachers' sense of community is related to positive outcomes, such as increased happiness and belongingness (Talò et al., 2014). Boyd et al. (2017) analyzed a sense of community among employees within public service organizations and defined the trait as a valuable predictor of job satisfaction and engagement. Teachers may likely develop a sense of community based on their high levels of community participation as professional educators working within a closely related and mutually dependent environment (Talò et al., 2014).

Members of these professional learning communities foster greater collaborative and idea-sharing among teachers when their needs and interests remain similar. Members who collaborate can encourage the development of positive teaching pedagogies while increasing a sense of community (Hammonds et al., 2013). Nir and Hameiri (2014) contended that a teacher's pedagogical proficiency would be largely affected by their community climate. In particular, the researchers observed that feedback from their administrators (e.g., the school principal) was a key means for teachers to improve their instructional practices. Similarly, Kraft and Papay's (2014) analysis showed that teachers' effectiveness was related to the supportiveness in their environments. Their findings represent just one of the pathways in which teachers' sense of community within the present study may have increased their job satisfaction

levels because improvements in instructional experience are likely to increase a teacher's overall work experience.

The literature has indicated that teachers' sense of community may influence job satisfaction in similar ways. Madrid's (2016) analysis on a sense of community within a sample of Catholic school teachers showed that a shared work environment between teachers, year after year, helped them improve their sense of community and build friendships. This development may be another factor that contributed to the participants having higher job satisfaction levels than those who lacked such connections.

Research has shown a positive school climate as one common factor contributing to a sense of community. Jones and Davenport (2018) found an association between a school's climate and its members' sense of connectedness and community. Researchers have linked a more positive school climate to improving academic performance and reducing school violence (Benbenishty et al., 2016; Jain & Cohen, 2015). Teachers, in general, want their students to succeed and be safe. Likewise, leaders who have improved school climate may reduce teachers' and other staff's feelings of low personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion (Thapa et al., 2013). Participants in the Thapa et al. (2013) study had fewer reasons to be dissatisfied with their jobs if they did not feel such negative outcomes, possessed a higher sense of community, and were in a more positive school climate. Therefore, the literature review has shown evidence that reinforces the validity of the findings shared within this study. The findings indicated that urban school district teachers' sense of community would predict their job satisfaction levels.

Theoretically, there is a sound basis for justifying and explaining the validity of the results as well. The sense of community theorists have opined that this variable develops

through shared emotional connections, integration and fulfillment of needs, influence, and membership (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Teachers who play a key role in their communities may identify strongly as members of the community, a membership they share with all of the school's stakeholders. These stakeholders can include other teachers, students, support staff, parents, the district, leaders in the community, businesses, and residents. Membership is logically connected to job satisfaction; if people define themselves as a member of a larger community, they may increase their sense of identification and belongingness (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The foundational concept of a psychological sense of community is that an individual feels that he or she belongs within a larger community of individuals (Sarason, 1974). If people feel a "sense of belonging," they are unlikely to leave their work. As discussed in the literature review, researchers have associated job satisfaction with turnover intention (Boyd & Nowell, 2014).

Hence, issues that detract from turnover intention within teachers are likely to correspond with an increase in their job satisfaction levels. For example, studies have shown that a sense of community has improved teachers' likelihood to stay within their positions (Boyd, 2014; Boyd & Nowell, 2014; Jones et al., 2013), a quality that lends stability to the school and helps teachers work harder toward helping students achieve school goals. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) illustrated this finding and found that students' grade levels were significantly influenced by higher rates of teacher turnover. The teacher aims to help students do well in school; therefore, teachers who achieve this goal can develop their job satisfaction, whereas failure will create frustration and undermine their contentment levels.

Teachers' levels of influence also have a rational beneficial effect on their job satisfaction levels. Communities are commonly formed based on the pursuit of common goals (Hammonds

et al., 2013). Therefore, teachers with a greater sense of community may be inspired by meeting the goals that they share with their fellow teachers. Teacher communities can form that increase members' sense of belonging and commitment (Madrid, 2016). As discussed in Jones et al. (2013), committed teachers are likely to work harder to help students reach school goals, thereby promoting the efficacy of their work and giving them more satisfaction.

The integration and fulfillment of needs have a valid theoretical basis for improving job satisfaction within teacher communities. Those who have their needs recognized and met are likely to improve their commitment to the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Teachers' willingness to persevere through difficulties will increase their job satisfaction levels, especially because the absence of this quality will promote defeatism and despair.

Finally, shared emotional connections have a beneficial effect on teachers' levels of job satisfaction. Through these bonds, teachers may experience higher levels of emotional investment and support. In other words, shared emotional connections can promote high-quality interactions (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Teachers who use these interactions can gain satisfaction with their work as opposed to low-quality interactions that undermine contentment levels.

Likewise, Maslow's (1959) hierarchy of needs theory affirms the rationality of results. The basis for this theory is that human fulfillment is hierarchical, with basic needs requiring fulfillment before higher-order ones (Maslow, 1959). After physiological needs, Maslow (1943) posited that individuals need to possess a sense of safety, security, love, and belonging before they could move to self-esteem and self-actualization. Satisfaction with one's job may represent an aspect of self-actualization (i.e., those who are self-actualized are satisfied with their work); therefore, such an outcome is predicated on earlier stages of development in Maslow's (1943)

model. The *Collins Dictionary* (“Job satisfaction,” n.d.) defined job satisfaction as the extent to which a person’s expectations, desires, and hopes are met about their employment. This definition shows that job satisfaction is a higher-order need.

In this study, a sense of community was shown to predict urban middle school teachers’ job satisfaction. For several reasons, a sense of community may be considered a lower order need to that of job satisfaction. For example, a sense of community may relate to an individual’s sense of safety and security; throughout history, humans have relied on their societies to acquire safety and security. The more connected a person is to a community, the more satisfied his or her need for a sense of survival. Thus, an individual can move higher up the hierarchy of needs to the next level of fulfillment, that of love and belongingness. Likewise, love and belongingness are fulfilled by an individual’s sense of community because belongingness is one of the main traits ascribed to an individual’s sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Hence, an individual’s sense of community is related to the second and third tier of Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs.

Theoretically, the individual who fulfills these community-related characteristics can consider higher-order needs, such as personal fulfillment (self-esteem) and satisfaction with work (self-actualization). The validity of this assumption was confirmed both by the results of the present study and other empirical studies. For example, Takaki et al. (2016) used Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs as a framework to show that feelings of acceptance and contribution within the workplace helped achieve greater levels of commitment and reduce psychological anguish. Similarly, Dou et al.’s (2017) analysis within Chinese secondary schools showed support for the idea that teachers who felt respected and valued had increased job satisfaction and perceptions about the value of their occupation. As such, there was ample evidence

justifying how teachers' strong sense of community predicated and predicted their levels of satisfaction with their jobs, according to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. The teacher who fulfills this first need will feel encouraged to go on to higher stages of fulfillment.

In conclusion, there was ample support from the literature, other related studies, and the theoretical models used to validate and explain the dismissal of this study's null hypothesis. No major element within the literature review or theoretical model contradicted the findings of the present study. Rather, those findings showed clues as to why a sense of community within the sample of urban middle school teachers was predictive of their job satisfaction, including enhanced school climate, greater belongingness, and increased hierarchical fulfillment of needs. The implications of these findings are offered in the following section.

Implications

Many valuable insights and contributions are possible from this study's finding that urban middle school teachers' sense of community predicts their job satisfaction. In this section, some of these implications are discussed, with a concentration on how the present researcher helped to fill in existing gaps within the research. The researcher offers valuable considerations for the impact of community and community-related policies on teachers' success in the workplace.

This researcher addressed several gaps in the literature. Most researchers have focused on how geographic factors influence teachers' sense of community. However, the current researcher considered this trait in the context of teachers' feelings of belonging. Furthermore, the researcher helped to correct the lack of literature on the subject by focusing on teachers. In general, there was a trend within the research centered on students and their outcomes rather than those who taught the students (Kaput, 2018). This finding is a significant oversight because student outcomes are so closely related to the characteristics of their teachers.

This finding is shown in the construct of teachers' job satisfaction. Numerous studies have shown a strong association between the happiness of students and teachers; researchers have defined the association as related to a teacher's level of satisfaction with a job (Russel et al., 2010; Tillman & Tillman, 2008). Furthermore, robust evidence exists that shows employees' job satisfaction is significantly related to their self-efficacy, obtainment of work goals, and turnover intention (Badri et al., 2013; Van den Berghe et al., 2014). Thus, research that provides empirical support for increasing teachers' job satisfaction, such as through their sense of community, is valuable for improving the environment of schools.

Urban school environments are especially challenged by several socioeconomic, racial, and environmental factors. Research has indicated that teachers who serve low-income and predominately minority students, which are disproportionately located within urban school districts (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014), have a 20% attrition rate (Djonko-Moore, 2015). Given the severe impact such turnover has on several school factors, including a sense of community and student performance, there is a great need for similar studies to examine how to improve urban schoolteachers' job satisfaction. As discussed by Howard (2010), understanding the urban culture within learning environments is a crucial factor in closing gaps in achievement for underserved and minority students.

Hence, these factors underline the significance of the present study, which has reaffirmed the value that a sense of community plays in building a teacher's sense of job satisfaction within urban school districts. With this understanding, future researchers may study the impact of policy decisions that initiatives lead to or detract from teachers' sense of community to support their job satisfaction levels. Possible avenues for such studies are discussed in the recommendations for future research.

Primarily, the value of this research is for urban school leaders. As discussed by Madrid (2016), school leaders handle implementing structures and policies to support the teacher's willingness to build relationships. This study's results confirm this assertion with empirical data derived from urban middle school teachers, a teacher demographic that requires additional support based on the extra challenges they face in serving low-income and minority students. Education policy decision-makers, within and without the school, can make thoughtful and informed choices that benefit teachers' learning communities through increasing understanding of how a sense of community can support teachers' job satisfaction. For instance, school leaders may reconsider the importance of teachers' lounges, considering the findings derived from the present study. Within these communal spaces, teachers may build professional relationships that support collaboration and their sense of community. In so doing, school leaders will likely enhance teachers' pedagogy (Hammonds et al., 2013) and job satisfaction as teachers create friendships with their colleagues.

Furthermore, school leaders may reassess the benefit that teachers' connectedness with the community has based on the results of the present study. Fostering opportunities for collaboration between teachers, students, and the community may increase teachers' sense of community and job satisfaction levels. School administrators should emphasize educational community volunteering, interviewing members of the community, and implementing other communal initiatives not just based on the educational benefits but also the sense of community. Therefore, school leaders may cultivate positive outcomes in students and staff alike.

Similarly, school administrators should place added value on initiatives that promote social harmony based on the findings of the present study. If teachers' sense of community predicts their job satisfaction and the psychological sense of community is related to school

climate (Jones & Davenport, 2018), improving the social atmosphere at school is likely to increase teachers' sense of job satisfaction. Therefore, leaders of training and programs that encourage social cohesiveness and understanding among students may develop improved outcomes for teachers. The connection shown between teachers' sense of community and their job satisfaction opens the path for positive developments in their training and management.

Conversely, administrators can use the results of the present study to understand where their efforts to improve teachers' job satisfaction have gone awry. If something is wrong in a school system, administrators ought to consider how teachers' dissatisfaction with their job is likely due to a structural factor that disempowers their abilities to meet a more fundamental need. This finding is illustrated in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which holds that love and belongingness are prerequisite factors to an individual's self-esteem and self-actualization. In other words, if teachers are largely dissatisfied, and turnover within urban school districts is high, the fault may derive from the circumstances that teachers have faced. Understanding this finding, school administrators may redirect their intervention efforts from the teachers to address the structural factors that disempower such teachers.

Finally, the study's covariates did not moderate the significance of a sense of community's impact on teachers' levels of job satisfaction. This finding indicated that their job satisfaction was substantially influenced by their sense of community, regardless of a teacher's gender, ethnicity, years in the workforce, or level of education. This finding reaffirms the strength of the observed relationship between teachers' sense of community and job satisfaction that, in the present study, was represented by a .25 increase in job satisfaction for an increase in participants' sense of community. Thus, education researchers and school administrators can

justify future research and policy efforts aimed toward enhancing teachers' sense of community to promote job satisfaction and related outcomes.

Limitations

Every study has limitations, and this one was no exception. First the limitations in terms of external validity or generalizability are discussed, then the limitations in terms of internal validity or causality, followed by the limitations in terms of measurement validity. These limitations are common across almost all correlational studies using surveys as the method of data collection (Trochim, 2009).

The study lacks external validity because a convenience approach to sampling rather than randomized sampling was utilized in choosing the participants. The numerous variables besides those measured with the survey instrument were not just as probable (in a technical sense) to be found in the sample as in the broader population. Accordingly, the sample cannot be assumed to be probabilistically equivalent to the population from which it was drawn. Though this limitation is not necessarily a function of the correlational design, convenience sampling (and therefore a lack of generalizability) is common to correlational studies (Trochim, 2009).

The study also lacks external validity on its face, or in terms of face validity (versus probabilistically in terms of random sampling). The city in which the study was conducted had a population of just 137,002, which was relatively small compared to even moderately sized cities. Hence, the setting from which the sample was drawn might not be as "urbanized" as would be preferred for a more generalizable study. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond this population.

A similar challenge was inherent in that 25.4% of the population living within northeastern Georgia lived below the poverty level, as compared with the state average of 14.9%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This poverty rate was much higher than in many other urban contexts; therefore, it could confound the generalizability of the results to areas where the rate of poverty was not as high. In other words, the high rate of poverty within the northeastern Georgia school district could be a threat to the study's external validity.

The researcher drew the participants from five participating schools within a school district of 55 schools to control for the variability these elements introduced. A total of 36,000 and almost 3,600 certified teachers were in this school district (Ga DOE, 2018). Hence, the diversity of the sample from this study might overcome some limitations identified from convenience sampling and demographic factors of northeastern Georgia.

However, the results were susceptible to simultaneity bias due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, insofar that all the data were collected at one point in time. In other words, the condition of causality that requires the independent variable to have occurred before the dependent variable cannot be met with survey-based research (Trochim, 2009). Given that all the data for the study were collected using a singular survey, the study results were susceptible to mono-source bias. This bias occurs when respondent fatigue can show in invalid and unreliable responses on surveys and questionnaires (Trochim, 2009). The final limitation in terms of internal validity was omitted variable bias, which was fundamental to all social science research (see Trochim, 2009).

Recommendations for Future Research

Many considerations for future research can be derived from the methods and results of the present study. In this section, a numbered list of these recommendations is offered, with justifications for their applicability to future research and their possible contributions to literature in the field.

1. Firstly, additional research should consider how teachers' sense of community impacts traits related to job satisfaction. As discussed in the literature review, many different outcomes are related to job satisfaction, such as emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and self-efficacy. Many implications derived from the present study rest on the assumption that teachers' increased job satisfaction from their sense of community would translate into these results. Future researchers could test the strength of this assumption by expanding the survey instruments to include measurements of emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, self-efficacy, student performance, and other related concepts. In so doing, researchers could further illustrate the value of the community for developing teachers' performances.
2. Future researchers can consider moderating variables that impact how a teacher's sense of community predict their job satisfaction. Online schooling is one particularly interesting area for such an analysis, especially with the 2020 pandemic of Covid-19. Researchers can analyze how physically removing students through a digital interface may influence teachers' sense of community and related outcomes, such as job satisfaction. Researchers have described a sense of community as a "dual concept" because it can both refer to geographic proximity shared among individuals as well as to the relational aspects shared between people, regardless of geography (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). If online schooling detracts from teachers' sense of community, it will affirm the former definition. However, if online schooling does not diminish teachers' sense of community, this finding will affirm the latter definition. Harvey et al. (2014) considered this issue in their analysis of students' experiences in online classes that showed students had a detached sense of

- community, likely owing to a lack of physical interaction. Nevertheless, teachers' experiences were not considered. Therefore, future researchers can determine whether the same effect is true for teachers as a valuable contribution to the literature, especially as online classes become a more popular teaching method during the COVID-19 crisis.
3. Analysis of other moderating variables may prove insightful, as well. With the rise in school shootings, for example, there have been efforts made toward arming teachers so that they can protect themselves and their classrooms (Minschew, 2018). Although the actual safety of such a policy is hard, if not impossible, to study empirically, researchers could consider how arming teachers impacts their sense of community. Throughout this study, ample literature and theoretical models have shown how teachers' sense of community is related to their feelings of belongingness, membership, emotional connection, and influence on a larger community of individuals (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). However, a teacher carrying a concealed weapon may significantly impact his or her ability to achieve a sense of community for several reasons. The guns would be ever-present reminders of the possibility of unexpected, sudden, and lethal violence within the workspace. Hence, having weapons could jeopardize teachers' development of the sense of safety and security, as well as love and belongingness, and hinder the fulfillment of more refined psychological needs, such as job satisfaction and peak performance. Therefore, a study on this subject may yield valuable insights for policy decision-makers considering such a route to protect against school violence. Other moderating

- variables of relevance should be identified and studied by researchers to justify the generalizability of the results discussed in this study.
4. Other theoretical models may provide valuable insights into the way that teachers' sense of community and job satisfaction interact. For example, transformational leadership theory may be an applicable model to consider both in the context of how school administrators use transformational leadership to guide teachers and how teachers use the approach to guide their students. As discussed by Drolet and Arcand (2013), teachers may develop a sense of community by acting as role models for their students. Because such behavior is a core trait of transformational leaders (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007), future researchers should consider how these traits align. Relatedly, researchers have shown the school principal's transformational leadership to have a tremendous effect on a teacher's job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013). Furthermore, transformational leadership is effective in improving aspects of school culture, including cooperation, as well as social and educational development (Sahin, 2004). Given that school climate is intimately associated with teachers' sense of community (Jones & Davenport, 2018), transformational leadership likely increases teachers' sense of community. Hence, future researchers may consider whether this assumption is valid. If so, the researcher can contribute to transformational leadership training and implementation programs for teachers and school administrators alike.
 5. Finally, it is recommended that future researchers examine how these constructs operate in more diverse contexts. As described by Jason et al. (2015), an individual's

sense of community is derived from three domains: identity, ethnicity, and membership. Therefore, exploring how these factors influence teachers' sense of community, interact with one another, and contribute to related job satisfaction will expand the present range of research and assist in the implementation of community development-related policies within specific niches.

Conclusion

Urban middle school teachers' sense of community was found to predict their level of job satisfaction based on the data collected in this study. This finding answers the study's research question and rejects the null hypothesis developed by the reviewed literature and theoretical framework. School administrators may use the conclusions of the present study to develop and refine their community-related initiatives for teachers to develop their job satisfaction and other related benefits. Likewise, researchers may use the recommendations to cover limitations within the present study and advance the literature in the field.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

February 17, 2020

Paula Anita Murphy

IRB Exemption 4127.021720: The Relationship Between Sense of Community and Job Satisfaction Among Urban Middle School Teachers

Dear Paula Anita Murphy,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

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Appendix B: Permission to Use SCI-2

Greetings,

Thank you for your interest in the Sense of Community instrument. I look forward to hearing about your experiences with it. I have reviewed your request form, and you are approved to use the SCI or SCI-2 for the research project described. Please find the index attached. With permission to use the index, you can create and disseminate the survey through any format described in your approved application.

As part of your agreement to use this instrument, you have agreed to participate in a short user survey. This periodic survey helps us further validate the instrument which, in turn, makes any work you do with it more rigorous. Thank you in advance for your participation. I wish you the best with your research.

Sincerely,

Courte

Courte Van Voorhees, Ph.D.
Associate
Community Science
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Appendix C: Permission to Use Job Satisfaction Survey

(The JSS is provided free for non-commercial educational and research purposes.

Job Satisfaction Survey, copyright Paul E. Spector, 1994, All rights reserved.)

JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

Paul E. Spector

Department of Psychology

University of South Florida

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