PISTOL PACKING EDUCATORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON EDUCATORS

DESIRE TO CARRY A CONCEALED WEAPON IN SCHOOL

by

Jaycia Jacobs

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how educators described their desires and lived experiences of carrying a firearm in a K-12 school. A transcendental phenomenological design was used in this study to examine the essence of the participants' experiences. The theory that guided this study was Crano's (1995) vested interest theory which established an individual's perceived significance and hedonic relevance of an attitude-implicated action's outcome. Attitude-behavior consistency exists when there is a strong association between opinions and actions. The central research question guiding this case study asked: What were the lived experiences of educators who desired and who were licensed to carry concealed weapons in school? The sub-research questions investigated how did your desire to conceal carry empowered your ability to defend yourself and others? What impact does your feeling of safety motivates you to carry a firearm? How do educators describe their experiences in relation to the Second Amendment Rights? This study intended to capture the authentic voice of educators who desired to conceal carry in a K-12 school. The method for this transcendental phenomenological study incorporated educators lived experiences through in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and a focus groups as the primary data collection methods. Three themes emerged for the data, safety, training, and protection. The findings of the study showed that all participants believed that possessing a firearm while in the school environment improved their ability to counterbalance potential shooters intruding into their work environment.

Keywords: school shootings, active shooter, mass shooting.

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I give all Glory to God for seeing me through this process. I am also dedicating this dissertation to my dad, who is in Heaven; he would be proud of the many accomplishments I have achieved. He is the reason I have kept pushing through; he is always in my heart. My mom, if she were alive, would have been incredibly proud. I also would like to thank my husband for helping me as I sat typing papers to meet deadlines, as he missed those homemade meals; thanks for your patience and understanding. I would also like to thank my daughters, Brittney and Jayde, my grandchildren Codi and Vhori, who have been in my corner from the beginning. I would like to thank all my sisters, especially Renee, who mentored and guided me on the onset of this journey. My sister Laura and Cynthia for supporting me and keeping me encouraged. Also, my niece had my back at the beginning of my journey. I would also like to thank my Chair, Dr. Koester, and my Co-Chair, Dr. Fowler, for being so supportive and keeping me on track throughout this writing process of my dissertation. Thank you, I could not have made it without you all believing in me; I love you all.

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List of Abbreviations

Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate (ALICE)

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

Departments of Education and Homeland Security (DHS)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Gun-Free School Zone Act (GFSZA)

Hedonic Relevance (HR)

Higher Education Institution (IHE)

Improvised Explosive Devices (LED)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASP)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)

National Institute of Justice (NIJ)

National Rifle Association (NRA)

Post-Traumatic Disorder (PTSD)

School Access-Control Vulnerability Index (SAVI)

School Resource Officer (S. R. O.)

State School Safety Centers (SSSCs)

The United States Governance Accountability Office (USGAO)

Vested interest (VI)

Vested Interest Theory (VIT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Mass school shootings have surged in the United States; schools were scrambling to find an answer to combat the critical questions of effectively addressing safety in the schools (Jonson, 2017). In the wake of the mass school shootings, policymakers and educational administrators have come under pressure to take steps to provide solutions addressing school safety (Lenhardt et al., 2018). Educators have become a part of the equation in several states to carry concealed weapons to help protect the school. At least 10 states allowed educators to carry a weapon in schools; a few of these states include Alabama, Alaska, Michigan, South Dakota, Oregon, and Wyoming (Aizenman, 2018; Dwyer, 2019; Gifford Law Center, 2018). The importance of this research gave educators who were licensed to carry a concealed firearm and those who desired to carry in school a "voice" as they described the phenomenon of their reasoning to carry in a K-12 school.

This research served as a springboard propelling insight for district personnel, school administrators, and safety committees an answer to provide support and security measures in schools had the impending North Carolina gun laws were to go into effect. This transcendental qualitative study explored the lived experience of who desired to carry concealed and educators who already carry a firearm in K-12 schools. This chapter provided the background of mass school shootings, theoretical context, situation to self, purpose and problem statements, the significance of the study, the research questions, and definitions of key terms used throughout the present study.

Background

Mass shootings were defined as an incident where at least four people were murdered with a gun (Kelly, 2017). School shooting incidences have intensified in magnitude and scope after heavily publicizing American society throughout the 1960s. Muschert (2007) chronicled the broad typology of school-related shootings as they could entail mass murders (e. g. , 1927 Bath Consolidated School tragedy; (Snow, 2020), rampage by a school member or a former school member (e. g. , Virginia Tech; (Muschert, 2007), government shootings by police or (e. g. , 1968 shootings at South Carolina State University; (Brown, 2021), or targeted shootings by a school member or a former school member (e. g. , 1992 Tilden High shooting in Chicago, Illinois; (Greathouse & Belknap, 2022).

Kennedy (2018) stated four school shootings were recorded from 1970 to 1979, five instances from 1980 to 1989, and 28 shootings from 1990 to 1999, while 25 school shooting cases were noted from 2000 to 2010. From 2000 to 2017, there were 37 cases of active shootings in elementary and secondary schools and 15 incidents of school shootings in post-secondary institutions (New Report on Crime & Safety in Schools Released, 2019). In 2018 and 2019, there were 49 shooting incidents (Crawford, 2021; Geher, 2018; Livingston et al., 2018). This trend demonstrated an increased frequency of school shootings through the decades (Lin et al., 2018).

School shootings have created considerable public interest and fostered a common belief that schools were unsafe for many students. Many of the schools' protection and protective policies have been adopted in response to school shootings, which had little empirical evidence. Strategies such as zero-tolerance discipline and student profiling has been frequently dismissed as sound policies (Cornell, 2020).

After the Columbine shooting incident, the US Department of Education and the US Secret Service collaborated to examine plans behind targeted shootings in the school settings from 1974 to 2000 by reviewing 37 shooting incidences (Abel et al., 2022; DeVos et al. 2018). The evidence suggested that the attackers were either former or current students, used handguns, shotguns, or rifles (Jewett et al., 2022; Regehr et al., 2017). Attackers were keen on harming at least one faculty member or administrator in 54% of the incidences, while students were specified as targets in 41% of the incidences (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014).

Nevertheless, the shootings viewed harmful as individuals who were not identified as targets in the attacks were either killed or injured. In the cases analyzed, 57% were students, while 39% were staff, faculty members, or administrators (Regehr et al., 2017). Assessing shooting incidences shows that some attackers demonstrated a suspicious interest in violence before the ultimate school shooting by obsessing about particular books, movies, or video games. (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2018; Palumbo, 2016). Understanding the history of mass school shootings is necessary to uncover such attacks' motivation and reasoning (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Paolini, 2015). Early school shootings have not always been thoroughly recorded (Katsiyannis et al., 2018).

The first documented mass school killing was the Pontiac Rebellion Massacre (Paolini, 2015; Sandersen et al., 2018; Torres, 2016). The incident sparked public outcry but did not last for long as school violence was not widespread. Ward (2003) described the first documented mass school murders, which dated back to the 1750s. The French and Indian Wars begun in the 1750s through the 1760s; this was difficult for Native Americans and whites in Pennsylvania.

The Pontiac Rebellion was triggered by discontent with how the British handled the native tribes (Paolini, 2015). The French and their Indian allies voiced their outrage at how the

British were killing and scalping the natives. Thus, begun the start of the French and Indian Wars. A Native American alliance headed by Chief Pontiac mounted an assault on the British forces (Ward, 2003).

Pontiac Rebellion Massacre marked a tragedy for Enoch Brown and his students on July 26, 1764 (Torres, 2016). The Nepal Indians arrived in the town of Cumberland Valley and entered a small schoolhouse. The schoolmaster Enoch Brown and 11 of his students had begun their school day before the Indians rushed into the school. While two Indians blocked the door, the third captured the headmaster, and the eleven students were bludgeoned over the head. The teacher and students were scalped and left for dead; one student got away by hiding in the chimney (Paolini, 2015; Ward, 2003).

Boissoneault (2017) provided details on the disastrous school bombing on May 18, 1927. The actions undertaken by Andrew Kehoe led to suspicions that he was insane, demented, or crazy. Carr (1932) further recounted the schoolhouse's violent attack and emphasized Kehoe's actions' intensity. The case marked the first indication of mental illness associated with mass killing. The mass murder incidence resulted in the deaths of six adults and 38 students.

Charles Whitman previously served as a US marine suffered from anger outbursts and mental illness. Scott-Coe (2013) and Ponder (2018) recounted the bloodbath that occurred on April 1, 1966, at the University of Texas tower building. The victims were students, professors, and bystanders. Whitman was killed after two police officers climbed the tower and shot the attacker. Since the initial school shootings, the overall frequency of mass violence has reached alarming levels (Baird et al., 2017). Motivations for mass shooting incidences varied. Katsiyannis et al. (2018) recounted the Cleveland Elementary School shooting in 1979. Multiple shots were fired into the public school.

There have been 207-grade school shootings in the 20th century. In the 19th century, 49 K–12 school shootings, 207 K–12 school shootings nationally in the 20th century, and 152 K–12 school shootings occurred since 2000. Hyewon, a researcher from the Cato Center for Educational Freedom, identified 134 school shootings from 2000 to 2018 (DeAngelis, 2018).

Just eight of these events happened in private institutions, and 122 occurred in public schools. The type of school was not explicitly established in 4 of the shootings (DeAngelis, 2018). The trend underscored the widespread nature of gun violence in the school setting (Paolini, 2015).

Gun crimes usually evoke spirited national debates on gun safety and the entire issue of gun control. Kelly (2017) recounted the horrific mass shooting and attempted bombing at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999. The massacre resulted in the death of 13 people (Jewett et al., 2022; Regehr et al., 2017).

Katsiyannis et al. (2018) described the deadliest school murder at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018. The massacre claimed the lives of 17 innocent people. The intruder opened fire on classmates and friends, killing ten, and wounded 13 others. The improvised explosive devices connected to the active shooter failed to detonate (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2018; Temkin et al., 2020). See figure 1 below for the timeline of the major school shootings in the United States from 1927-2018.

Figure 1

Timeline of Major School Shootings in the United States from 1927-2018

Mass School Shootings in the United States from 1927-2018				
1927	**1966**	**1979**	**1999**	**2018**
Bath School Killings	University of Texas Tower	Cleveland Elementary	Columbine High Massacre	Majory Stoneman Douglas
Andre Kehoe bombed Bath Consolidated School, in Michigan	Charles Whitman, climbed the observation desk at Texas University Tower on August 1st	One woman Brenda Spencer, planned an attack on her neighborhood school	On April 20th two students Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris planned an elaborate massacre, which killed 12 students and one teacher	A 19-year-old named Nikolas Cric, randomly shot and killed 17 students and injuring 17 others
This attack killed 38 children, 6 adults, and injured 58	He randomly began shooting killing 15 people, and injuring 31 others	On January 29, she killed 2 people wounding nine others eight were children	The killers made homemade bombs, but they failed to detonate	School shooting have continued since this date and time

This table shows a timeline of major school shootings in the United States, 1927- 2018

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had expressed concerns about mass school shootings (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018; Gramlich, 2019). Baird et al. (2017), the FBI, reported that the frequency of mass shooting incidents had grown over the past 14 years (Magyar, 2019). The trend is alarming, considering 154 school shootings in the US from 2013 to 2015 (Kalesan et al., 2017; Rowhani & Moe, 2019; Temkin et al., 2018). Despite calls for action, there is minimal progress in policy formulation to address mass shootings.

Chrusciel et al. (2015) noted an increase in mass school shootings resulted in student and faculty deaths, stressing the need for adequate safety measures. The aim is to ensure school administrators and policymakers develop comprehensive plans to guarantee security for both

learners and school employees (Short, 2019; Paolini, 2015; Schildkraut & Stafford, 2016). The concerted measures were necessary to assure learners of their safety in the school environment.

Historical Context

Over the years, there has been a trend toward arming teachers. For most of American history, citizens were free to bring weapons into school grounds without facing many limitations (Eadens et al., 2018; Viano et al., 2021). In fact, until recently, it was not uncommon for students to carry firearms, use them for hunting or target practice, or participate in school-authorized rifle clubs (Gramlich, 2019; Kopel, 2015). Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia recalled growing up in New York City in the 1950s and participating as a member of the rifle team carrying a rifle on the subway to school (Ciccotelli, 2020; Gramlich, 2019; Kopel, 2009; Lott & Wang, 2020). As a result of more stringent and more uniform gun laws, many states adopted legislation prohibiting firearms on school property (Ciccotelli, 2020; Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Lott & Wang, 2020).

However, the increasing trend in school shootings has focused on the potential solution of arming school educators as a second line of defense in an active shooter incident (Gramlich, 2019; Winston, 2016). Long before the 2012 Sandy Hook Shooting and the controversial issue emerged, gun legislation in several states opened up schools' potential to allow educators or school staff to bear guns (Elliott, 2015). Many states have a patchwork of legislation that differed significantly regarding who can bring firearms to school and when they could bring them onto the school grounds (Butkus, 2020; Gramlich, 2019; Kolbe, 2020; Lott, 2019).

Erwin (2019) addressed the current findings on guns in schools; at least eight states allowed educators to some extent to possess a firearm on K-12 school premises; these states include Kansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming (Wilkins, 2022). In 2018,

Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Maryland, and Oklahoma introduced legislation to help school employees bear arms on the school premises (Hobbs & Brody, 2018). The Education Commission of the States (2019) showed that 19 states allowed anyone with permission from school authority to carry a firearm. These states included Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Vermont. States that permitted concealed carry only on school premises for license holders included Alabama, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah. Guns in Schools, 2021; Gifford Law Center, 2021).

The states required Conceal Carry permit and permission from school authorities include Idaho, Indiana, Missouri. Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee required permission from school authorities and completed required training to conceal carry a weapon on school premises (only in qualifying districts) of Texas, South Dakota. Only 21 states allowed school security to carry a firearm on school premises. There were 44 states which enabled Law enforcement to carry a concealed weapon in schools.

New Hampshire has no legislation banning adult individuals from possessing firearms in the school zone. New Hampshire legislation determined the "safe school zone" to include all school facilities or school busses that students were permitted to carry (Flannery et al.,2021; Gramlich, 2019; Guns in Schools, 2021; School Safety; New Report on Crime & Safety in Schools Released, 2019; Wilkins, 2022). See figure 2 below for an overview of states that allow guns on K-12 school premises.

Figure 2

An Overview of States that Allow Guns on K-12 School Premises

Firearm Regulation/Stakeholder	State and Implementation Format
Schools can authorize anyone to carry firearms onto school premises	The policy is applicable to 19 states (New York, Nevada, Montana, New Jersey, Alaska, Oklahoma, Oregon, Vermont, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Arizona, Connecticut, Ohio, Utah, and Texas)
Concealed carry (CC) is permissible to all licensed gun holders	1. In Alabama, Utah, Rhode Island, and Oregon, an individual only needs a CC Permits for his or her weapons. 2. In Idaho, Missouri, and Indiana, an individual would need permission from the school and have to comply with CC policies.
Non-security staff can carry guns.	1. In Wyoming, Kansas, and Idaho, individuals need school permission and a CC permit. 2. In Oklahoma, parts of Tennessee, Missouri, Florida, South Dakota, and Texas, staff would need school permission and proof of completion of required training.
School security.	In 21 states, Illinois, Indiana, California, West Virginia, Oklahoma, Colorado, Delaware, Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, North Dakota, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, Alabama, South Dakota, Washington, Mississippi, and Michigan, school security can be legally armed with guns on school premises.
Gun restrictions apply to students only	New Hampshire.
No relevant laws on gun control in schools	Hawaii
Gun policy exclusion for law enforcement	In 44 states, the police can legally enter K-12 school premises with weapons. The states were Mississippi, Alaska, Missouri, Montana, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Virginia, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Washington, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Texas, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Maryland, Maine, Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Alabama, Vermont, and West Virginia.

An overview of states that allow guns on K-12 school premises (Erwin, 2019).

After the Columbine High School massacre, school administrators and local police departments collaborated to galvanize police officers as school resource officers or in-house school personnel as a first-line defense against potential threats. Arming educators' conversations was not an entirely new idea for some school districts (Ciccotelli, 2020). Only a few states, Kansas, South Dakota, and Tennessee, allowed school personnel, including educators, to carry firearms. A decade before the Sandy Hook School shooting, school employees in Utah had been able to carry concealed weapons on campus (Lott & Wang, 2020; Rostron, 2014). It is

reported that at least four Texas school districts have allowed select staff to carry concealed arms in school (Beggan, 2019; Hunter, 2018).

Carrying weapons in schools' origins were based on a unique situation. For example, educators in the Harrold, Texas school district, a very rural Texas area, have carried weapons because of the long-distance it took for police officers to respond to a potential threat at a school in the district (Lott & Wang, 2020; Rees et al. 2019). Following the elementary school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, the governor of South Dakota, Dennis Daugaard, was the first to sign a law after the attack, authorizing educators to legally carry a firearm in school to respond to an active shooter threat (Wallace, 2015). Those who oppose the idea of armed educators spoke of fears of accidental injury to someone. Simultaneously, advocates viewed the law as a means of empowering school districts and preventing further injury and loss of life (Ames-Lopez, 2020; Rostron, 2014).

Rostron (2014) found that the number of armed school workers was difficult to measure adequately. Many state regulations did not address the issue or criminalize the practice and allowed guns with minimal oversight and little scrutiny. The VICE News investigation of 2019 showed that on February 14, 2018, a year after Parkland, the number of school districts armed their teachers more than doubled, from about 215 school districts to about 500, with hundreds of thousands of students (Owen, 2019).

Lott (2019) stated there is no comprehensive accounting of the extent to which school districts allowed teachers or school personnel to carry guns, which varied widely across states. Although some school districts had publicly disclosed that they had armed employee programs, no official tally of the number of educators who carried a firearm at schools currently exists (Wilkins, 2022) . Schools chose not to divulge the information on the grounds that it would

unnecessarily alert potential shooters and evoked fear in parents and students. Additionally, while the program provided professional firearms training for educators, currently, educators must purchase their registered firearms (Hobbs & Brody, 2018).

The Vice News investigation revealed the identity of armed teachers and school workers had been kept confidential (Cornell, 2020; Owen, 2019; Wilkins, 2022). The Vice News investigation noted the identity of armed teachers is confidential. School protection measures were classified and not open based on a right-to-know order. A few years ago, arming teachers was not an abstract legislative issue but a realistic security strategy in hundreds of school systems (Dwyer, 2019; Owen, 2019; School Safety Guns in Schools, 2021; Wilkins, 2022).

Across many states, the choice to arm teachers or employees frequently lay with local school board administrators who were compelled to decide who might carry. School systems were rushing to arm workers even though there is no definitive data to endorse arming personnel or stating arming educators could save lives (Dwyer, 2019; Owen, 2019; Rostron, 2014; School Safety Guns in Schools, 2021). Additionally, there were no definite rules for enacting these initiatives amid resistance from local law enforcement and school insurance carriers (Dwyer, 2019; Education Week Staff, 2018; Owen, 2019; Rostron, 2014; School Safety Guns in Schools, 2021; Wilkins, 2022).

Social Context

Mass school shootings presented an epidemic that needed addressing (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Murders containing firearms happened roughly every two weeks in the US, whereas school shootings happened on average monthly (Luca et al., 2020; Towers et al., 2015). Shootings have increased society's interest in understanding the undercurrents and driving variables behind such incidents primarily because per capita shooting-related incidents and

mortality were substantially higher in the United States than in any other developed country (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Towers et al). The United States had the world's highest civilian firearms concentrations: 120. 4 per 100,000 (Gramlich, 2019; Ingraham, 2018; Pearlstien, 2018).

Brazil had the greatest number of gun fatalities globally, with 43,200 deaths out of 250,000 worldwide, a gun death rate of 21. 9 per 100,000 Brazilian people (World Population Review, 2021). The United States had the 28th highest number of fatalities from gun violence globally: 4. 43 deaths per 100,000 citizens in 2017, significantly higher than in most wealthy nations (Aizenman, 2018; Gramlich, 2019). This was nine times the rate that Canada had, which was 0. 47 deaths per 100,000 of the population. The number of fatalities were 29 times greater than in Denmark, which had 0. 15 deaths per 100,000 (Aizenman, 2018; Flannery et al.,2021; Gifford Law Center, 2018b; Gramlich, 2019). Gun crime in the United States were higher and outnumbered other high-income countries (Aizenman, 2018; Flannery et al.,2021; Gifford Law Center, 2018; Luca et al., 2020).

Firearm fatalities correlated with a dramatic rise in weapons production. American companies produced millions of weapons per year and imported even more. Domestic firearm production rose significantly under President Barack Obama's first term, partially due to fears that the Republican White House, a pro-gun-controlled administration, believed their guns could be taken from civilians, which were proven to be false (Depetris-Chauvin, 2015) As of 2017, the number of handguns, shotguns, and rifles sold in the United States was almost three times greater than in the 1990s. Currently, the United States had more weapons than it had residents (Flannery et al.,2021; Gramlich & Schaeffer, 2019; Ingraham, 2018; Pearlstien, 2018).

The Second Amendment was a component of the United States Bill of Rights incorporated into the constitution in 1791 (Gramlich, 2019; Kopel & Greenlee, 2018). The adoption of the bill involved charged debate about federal versus state rights. For instance, the anti-federalists were concerned that the government could sustain a formidable army, signifying a temptation for power abuse (Blum, 2019; Paine, 2020).

The right to bear arms stressed in the Second Amendment was initially intended to cushion against possible foreign or domestic tyranny and support the states to form controlled militias. In this case, militia denoted ordinary citizens. It was intended to provide paramilitary services, law enforcement in emergencies, or defense services without committing to specified terms of service or regular salary (Blum, 2019; Paine, 2020).

There were varying interpretations of the Second Amendment between individual and collective interpretations of the Amendment; though, the US Supreme Court had upheld individual right to bear arms. In *District of Columbia v. Heller* (Cole et al. 2021) the US Supreme Court overturned a government law stopping citizens from possessing handguns in the US capitol (Linnå, 2017; Winkler, 2018). The majority ruling affirmed that the history and language of the Second Amendment focused on protecting gun ownership for personal defense purposes, not necessarily an exclusive right to the states to maintain their organized militias (Perna, 2018).

Consequently, the *McDonald v. City of Chicago* (Duignan, 2019) case outcome aligned with the Second Amendment interpretation. The Second Amendment, lined with the judicial instances spelled out in the *Due Process Clause* in the Fourteen Amendment, supplements the Second Amendment stated that safeguarding citizens from possible state infringements of individual rights to bear arms should not be overstepped the federal government (Fields, 2020;

Kopel & Greenlee, 2018; Zick, 2019). The outcomes aligned with the verdicts rendered in *Heller* and *McDonald,* specifying that the government had no legal basis for outlawing possession of handguns by civilians in their respective homes (Kopel & Greenlee, 2018; Zick, 2019).

Assessment and interpretation of the Second Amendment indicated that self-defense was a primary consideration among the component framers. Thus, citizens had a legal right to possess firearms for immediate self-defense purposes. Assuring individuals should be allowed to bear arms for the sake of safeguarding their liberties, especially if they took up arms in the context of an organized militia (Kopel & Greenlee, 2018; Zick, 2019; Paine, 2020). The second Amendment aligned with the right to bear firearms in the home setting. The assessment applied at the state level through the Due Process Clause outlined in the fourteenth Amendment.

Mass shootings were the cause of legislative action, despite less than 1% of deaths related to firearms (Aizenman, 2018; Gifford Law Center, 2018b; Luca et al., 2020). The shootings were possibly among the worst forms of gun violence. Gun violence had a critical impact on Americans affecting tens of thousands of lives every year (Wenner, 2017; Winston, 2016). Weak gun regulations and unlimited access to firearms had made taking one's own lives and the lives of other people all too convenient (Aizenman, 2018; Gifford Law Center, 2018b; RAND Corporation, 2020).

Crime with weapons had formed our society's structure, traumatizing millions, and places significant financial pressures on us all (Aizenman, 2018; Gifford Law Center, 2018b). Lankford (2015) explained that mass shootings imposed a psychological impact on the victims and community members where the incident occurred. Schildkraut and Stafford (2016)

acknowledged that mass shooting has the potential to affect people who were both local and spatially distant from the shooting. Contagion theory outlines how crowds may influence others.

Pescara and Raleigh (2017) detailed a statistically significant rise in the number of public mass shootings and suicides within two weeks after a widely publicized occurrence due to media contagion and copycat effects. The media's tendency to sensationalize shootings could encourage vulnerable people to lash out in like. Detailed reports in the media about mass shootings and suicides inspired more people to act violently.

Sensationalized media coverage of suicide is as likely to inspire imitators as coverage of public mass shootings (Pescara & Raleigh, 2017). Gustave Le Bon is widely regarded as the first to develop the concept of contagion theory. Contagion theory is known as a collective behavior theory that describes how the influence of a crowd may have a hypnotic effect on individuals.

Originally formulated in 1910 by Gustave Le Bon, contagion theory is a psychological phenomenon wherein every crowd, every feeling, and behavior were contagious and contagious to such an extent that the person readily sacrificed his interest to the common interest (Pescara & Raleigh, 2017; Ramsey, 2017). The idea of contagion proposed that individuals are susceptible to a hypnotic effect induced by large groups of people, leading them to behave in ways they normally would not (Pescara & Raleigh, 2017; Ramsey, 2017). Le Bon found that specific influences encouraged the spontaneous emotional upheaval of the crowd: participants of the crowd feel anonymous; these feelings of anonymity liberated the participants from the normal constraints and caused the spread of contagious norm-breaking behavior. When the crowd achieved a critical degree of emotion, participants lost their ability to resist influential figures' recommendations strong emotional responses were propagated with contagious results (Mahalleh et al., 2017; Ramsey, 2017).

The *"contagion"* effect suggests that the probability of another mass shooting could occur soon, similar to a copycat (Kennedy, 2018; Ramsey, 2017; Towers et al., 2015). This effect showed that behaviors could be *"contagious"* and spread through a population (Ramsey, 2017). Le Bon (1910) as cited by Kalesan et al. (2017) stated the contagion theory could assist in identifying the; school shootings; the body of research had shown that mass shootings involving firearms were inspired by similar incidents recently committed (Cao et al., 2017; Faroqi & Mesgari, 2015; Liu & Wiebe, 2019; Mao et al., 2020; Springer, 2018).

The widespread public attention and press had raised significant concerns about school shootings and the use of firearms (Abdalla et al., 2018; Paolini, 2015). Lin et al. (2018) studied the time trends of mass shootings noted that online mass media coverage of the recent shootings and internet search interest levels predicted how soon the next shooting tragedy might occur. Pescara and Raleigh (2017) asserted that media contagion contributed to copycat mass shootings, which had society advocating for proactive reporting to reduce future incidents.

Researchers emphasized that most people heard of mass shootings through the media output. Stakeholders, including parents, educators, counselors, administrators, and students alike, were extremely worried regarding the safety of their schools (Graf, 2018; Paolini, 2015; Wallace, 2015). Society's fears had escalated since the rapid occurrences of mass school shootings, causing individuals to become proactive in arming and protecting themselves (Schildkraut & Stafford, 2016).

Stroebe et al. (2017) pointed out that after mass shooting incidences, there was an expectation from the public and lawmakers to implement harsher gun laws to help decrease people's fears. There were increased firearms sales when this occurred and demands for stricter arm control regulations were characteristically followed by mass public shootings (Gupton,

2017). Liu and Wiebe, (2019) explained that Republican lawmakers passed 32% more legislation the year following a school shooting than in other years, which was statistically substantial. Democratic lawmaker legislation passed 7% more laws the year after a mass shooting; these were estimated not statistically accurate (*Gunfire on school grounds in the United States*, 2019; Liu and Wiebe, 2019).

Theoretical Context

School shootings had had a significant effect on several facets of our life in the United States. They first became a noticeable concern in American society in the 1960s and had risen in prevalence and magnitude since then. Since 1990, school shootings and the number of casualties had gradually increased (Kennedy, 2018). Several researched studies had addressed whether arming educators was the best response to gun violence in our nation (Lott, 2019; Minshew, 2018; Rajan & Branas, 2018; RAND Corporation, 2018; Rogers et al., 2018).

Will (2020) identified three polls undertaken by Gallup, the National Education Association, and Teach Plus, which led to the same conclusion: most teachers did not desire to be armed. The online Gallup Panel polled approximately 500 U. S. educators. Around 70 percent of the participants did not believe they or other school personnel should have weapons in school, with about 60 percent suggested that guns could make schools less safe.

Gallup had been the only nationally representative survey of the three polling's available. Additionally, Gallup polls showed that 18 percent of teachers said they would register for special training to use a gun at school. Two-thirds stated they were "very confident" that they could manage a firearm successfully in a live shooting scenario (Brenan, 2019).

The vested interest theory will serve as the theoretical foundation for this study's research questions, measuring instruments, and explanations of its findings (Crano, 1983). Hedonic

relevance of an attitude object (or vested interest) was considered a key component in maintaining attitude-behavior consistency. Vested interest theory stressed the educators' attitude towards the gun in school and safety. Substantial work showed the importance of the vested interest for continuity for attitudes and behavior. The theory of symbolic politics, which stated self-interest, is irrelevant to the behavior and related attitudes.

Early-life responses generalized themselves to specific situations and inspired a behavior, often toward self-interest (Crano, 1997). However, research on the theory did not suggest that vested interest always controlled attitude-behavior reliability. It held that vested interest (or stake, as it is sometimes called), which refers to individual perceptions of the gain-loss consequences of a particular attitude object for its holder (Crano & Prislin, 1983), was moderated by five related factors (Crano, 1983).

These components were stake, salience, certainty, immediacy, and self-efficiency, forming the attitude object. Stake addresses the attitude of the person and how invested, they were in the object or issue. When looking at salience, the focus looked at how important the person is invested in the issue or object. Attitudes that are salient directly affect behavior.

In this research, the salience increased when the attitude had major personal effects. The educators discussed K-12 school conceal carry. The repercussions of an attitude's conduct promote attitude-behavior consistency. When the consequences of an attitude's behavior are clearly visible, attitude-behavior consistency increases. Certainty looks at the specific consequences the individual would ensue from an attitude relevant action.

In other words, the degree of certainty a person attached to a particular object of attitude. The immediacy addresses the consequences to the perceived time-lapse between an action, attitude, object, and its consequences, and lastly, self-efficacy, where the individual acted and

behaved in a certain way. Self-efficiency sought to understand the actual or perceived inclination of the individual to improve the situation (Crano & Prislin, 1995; Stroebe et al., 2017).

The present research was conducted to help understand educators' potential desire to carrying a firearm in the schools building they work. I could apply vested interest theory to educators who carry a weapon and examine their experiences with firearms and what drove their desires and attitudes for carrying a weapon. People become more invested when they familiarize themselves and begun interacting with an entity or concept.

Vested interest theory takes this and amplifies it to mean that a person's level of involvement and belief could predict their reaction and behavior toward a particular situation (Adame & Miller, 2015). Vested interest pertains to how an attitude towards a belief hedonically higher influenced the object or idea. The more likely a person's beliefs are to change, the more likely their conduct will change. When the focus was placed on educators concealing carry inside their school setting, educators had a stake in the matter because they work with children in the school setting.

When the attitude had major personal ramifications for the individual, the salience increased. Hedonic relevance of an attitude object (or vested interest) is considered a key component in maintaining attitude-behavior consistency. Having a more salient attitude allowed vested interests to operate, resulting in greater attitude-behavior consistency (Crano, 1997). However, the salience of concealed carry could vary from one educator to the next based on their views; they could have concerns about using a weapon as a person's beliefs could be formed from experiences (Adame & Miller, 2015).

Certainty and immediacy could also differ from one educator to another due to differing views about safety. While educators could carry a concealed weapon believing an occurrence could arise, Miller et al. (2013) contended that educators could not plan for a deadly school altercation since it was only one aspect of the dimension of attitude-behavior.

The theoretical perspectives could help to explore if the educators whose firearms perceived their vested interest by concealing carrying in the school if allowed to develop their own safety needs (Guest et al., 2017., 2017; Miller et al., 2013). At the forefront of nearly all educational institutions in the nation remained to contemplate the best approaches to ensure school safety. There was a need for additional security and protection measures to ensure that all students, staff, and faculty felt protected during school hours (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020).

A person's actions could be understood about these five fields of vested interest and how one's attitude can influence one's behavior (Guest et al., 2017). The vested interest theory could act as a lens to help direct, analyze and guide interview questions and explain the findings. Understanding any of these particular attitudinal factors, such as stake and salient, was necessary to understand how they felt about their safety. Examining the safety needs and understanding educators' perceptions of who desired to carry a weapon at school could help with school security plans (Fox & Fridel, 2018; Guest et al., 2017).

Situation to Self

My interest in this research topic arose from hearing educators could potentially be allotted to carry weapons in schools for added protection in the event of an active shooter. Working as a middle school educator, I was highly concerned. In March 2019, North Carolina lawmakers submitted a proposed law to allow educators to carry guns in schools. Since the

legislators had been contemplating this idea, I started to focus on whether educators could be responsible for such a significant duty. I looked at the school's architecture and had become worried about our weakness in a school assault event.

Although the school was built in 2012, the school lacked sufficient evacuation routes in an active shooter incident. Most classrooms in the school had just one entrance and no way to unlock the windows. Personally, captivated by the intent behind criminal deviance and learning of the Columbine massacre, I found myself following the gruesome details step-by-step of the mass school shooting tragedies.

Moustakas (1994) emphasized developing a philosophy for developing research issues and research questions for any qualitative study. I could base my research on epistemology theory, which dealt with conceptions of knowing and how we acquired knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Kankam, 2019). Epistemology sought to uncover knowledge of the world by delving into what, if anything, we could know about the topic. As this study made for a more rigorous and varied philosophical analysis, the most fitting premise for guiding this study was the view of epistemology (Allison et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Epistemology explained the physicality and the qualities of what is real when conducting a qualitative study. The studies being conducted and those who read the document each could have a different interpretation of the investigated reality (Moustakas, 1994). I could compartmentalize my prejudices and perceptions to extrapolate context to ensure confidence in the study correctly.

I could integrate various ways of documenting and recording the lived experiences of the participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). An interpretive model allowed insight into the motivation behind educators desiring to carry concealed weapons in school. My goal for

using the interpretive model could help me understand the educators' current perspectives through their lens as educators who conceal carried and their prior lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I focused on information sources such as belief, faith, and intuition; therefore, the epistemological foundation of this study was based on intuitive knowledge. If researchers focused on data gathered from people in the know, journals, leaders in organizations, then the epistemology was grounded on authoritative knowledge (Allison et al., 2018). At this stage in the research, I focused on and retrieved the participants' essence. I categorized the data based on participants' perceptions. It was essential to develop a philosophy for structuring research problems and relevant research questions to any qualitative study (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative research was crucial to educational research because it is an effective way to investigate "how" and "why" issues. Qualitative research enabled you to explore questions about human experiences that were difficult to quantify. Getting to the heart of a social phenomenon and examining key issues in their natural setting which could assist in broadening knowledge and comprehension.

First, you must comprehend qualitative research's philosophical position before developing the research topic, study design, data collecting techniques, and data analysis (Cleland, 2017). For this study, I depended on epistemology theory, which examined ideas of knowing and how we come to acquire knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Kankam, 2019). Epistemology sought to uncover knowledge of the world by delving into what, if anything, we knew about the topic.

I addressed this research utilizing ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions for this investigation. Within my ontological assumption, I realized that I needed to accept and embrace various realities. I investigated and delved into this study fully. I realized that each participant would see their experience through a different lens. Understanding this, I reported various realities from the different viewpoints as themes emerged from my research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

I depended on my epistemological assumption based on my conviction that knowledge is derived through the individuals' experiences. With this in mind, I needed to build rapport with the participants to elicit the necessary information to conduct this study. In order to remove my personal prejudices, I needed to collaborate closely with the participants in this study. I worked with them via the Zoom Link and engaged with them to get their unique perspectives on their experiences to obtain first-hand knowledge about their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

As a researcher, my attitudes, and beliefs about building relationships with educators were fundamental and were intertwined with my axiological assumptions. I accurately reflected the perspectives of participants on their experiences. As I shared the participants' perceptions of their experiences, I embed myself in this research study by acknowledging my values to understand the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was aware that I needed to hear their voices to understand the educators' experiences fully. My research sought to explore educators' perceptions of educators who had a desire to conceal carry a weapon in the K-12 school.

This research looked at how educators described their experiences of educators who desire to conceal carry a firearm in K-12 schools. I was aware that I needed to listen to the voices of the educators. I interviewed to comprehensively understand their experience of the

phenomenon. I prepared to listen closely to the voices of the educators I interviewed to understand their experience of the phenomenon entirely.

Because this research looked at how educators described their experiences of educators who desire to conceal carry a firearm. I approached this research from a post-positivist perspective. Postpositive researchers saw research as a sequence of logically connected procedures, believed in various views from participants rather than a single reality, and advocated for rigorous qualitative data collecting and analysis techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher for this study, I utilized multiple levels of data analysis to ensure rigor, and use of technology to aid with data analysis, promote validity procedures, and to assist in writing qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Problem Statement

K-12 schools have seen an uptick in school shootings in the United States. Despite the importance of school safety in grades K 12, most states do not permit concealed weapons on school property. These laws vary from one state to the next. The problem is school shootings have increased over recent years.

Many K-12 schools are using traditional or upgraded lockdown drills, and as a result, shooters still have found a way to infiltrate the school, killing children and educators. Educators are protectors and defenders for students in the school, but they can only defend themselves and the students using a pencil or a pair of scissors. In the event of a school shooter, educators should have an equalizer to protect and defend children and themselves.

The Uvalde shooting had well over 300 law enforcement officers surrounding the school building and did not act, leaving children and educators to die. After seeing video footage of trained officers idle, waiting for commands, children died. Scenarios like Uvalde's have

enlightened many educators on the necessity of carrying a firearm in a school (Kellner, 2022; Reeping, 2022).

School safety is imperative in K-12 schools, but not all states allow firearms on campus grounds due to state gun laws. School administrators no longer focus just on education they also need to ensure that schools are safe (Kelly, 2017; Homeland Security, 2020; Madfis, 2016). Due to the sporadic violence of school shooting threats, the district had to implement school safety procedure in an event of an active school shooter. There has been pending gun laws addressing educators to carry weapons into North Carolina schools as the solution to combat mass shootings in schools (Kelly, 2017; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Homeland Security, 2020).

This study sought to understand educators who desired to carry guns in schools. Currently, there is not a wealth of literature providing in-depth research addressing the topic of educators who desired to carry concealed weapons in school. There were immense debates on whether the educator should be armed in school. The proponents believed educators who carried in school could deterred gun violence in their schools (Education Week Staff, 2018; Lott, 2019).

Everytown for Gun Safety (2015) opposed educators bearing arms in school. There was little or no evidence to show arming teachers could safeguard children in schools, although research showed that arming teachers could make children less secure in school (Rajan & Branas, 2018). To better understand how the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of educators relate to their desire to carry a firearm in a K-12 school setting, researchers have forgotten to investigate/explore this subject more (Cho et al., 2019; Rajan & Branas, 2018; Education Week Staff, 2018).

Although extensive discussions exist on whether the educator should be armed in school, there were several states where educators could carry weapons in school. However, proponents

believed that educators carrying a gun in school could deter gun violence in the schools (Baranauskas, 2020; DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Education Week Staff, 2018; Lott, 2019; Minshew, 2018; School Safety Guns in Schools, 2021). Everytown for Gun Safety (2015) strongly opposed educators bearing arms in school. There seemed to be a lack of research or evidence concerning arming educators and how they could safeguard children and staff members.

Since the Columbine school massacre, over 320,000 children have been victims of gun violence on school campuses. There have been 340 school shootings since Columbine. Based on the available data, at least 188 students, teachers, and others have been murdered, and 389 others have been wounded due to violent acts (Cox et al., 2022; Goff, 201; Jewett et al., 2022).

Countless school shootings have occurred, most of which have gone unreported or discussed. Many school shootings have failed to make the headlines or evening news since the Columbine massacre (Speiser, 2018).

The school shootings with the most deaths have received the most publicity. Nonetheless, mass and school shootings seem integral to everyday life in the United States. Have we become desensitized to the deaths of our educators and students? I have outlined various arguments for why I believe this study is essential to investigate further. Failing to do research like mine could have unfavorable results.

Maya Rossin-Slater of SIEPR researched the effects of a school shooting, and the findings were concerning. In the first two years following a school shooting, there was an increase in chronic absenteeism, grade repetition among students, and unemployment (Tucker & Lastrapes, 2019). Threats of school shootings prompted schools to conduct lockdown and practice drills preparing students for actual shooting incidents, which terrifies students. The

threats of school shootings have affected our school institutions (Crawford, 2021; Tucker & Lastrapes, 2019).

In addition to the casualties, those children at the scene of a violent school crime trying to flee from the shooter by hiding under desks, behind closed doors also suffer long-term severe psychological effects (Abel et al., 2022; Crawford, 2021; Hilaire et al., 2022). Two teenagers who survived the 2018 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School took their own lives. A child who survived the 2012 school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School also took his own life, prompting questions about the role and impact of survivor guilt.

Survivor guilt is the feeling that one is to blame for one's own survival after witnessing the deaths of many others. With school shootings, children need psychological support and warranted mental health care (Crawford, 2021; Geher, 2018). Before the rise of school shooting incidents, mental health care was unfounded due to the lack of school shooter incidents.

Furthermore, the ripple effects of school shootings extend far beyond the schools and the individuals who learn and work there. School shootings have lasting effects on each family and on relationships within communities, including parents, the school, law enforcement agencies, and city government, irrespective of whether the shooting occurred in a community with high criminal activity, or a community known to be safe and stable (Tucker & Lastrapes, 2019). A study of this magnitude must continue. Every morning before I walk into the school building, I quietly say a prayer that we all come home safely and just as we arrive.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to interview educators who desired or did conceal carry in a K-12 school. These educators would come from states

allowing them to conceal carry in their schools. I sought educators that allowed educators to conceal carry.

To conduct this study, I sought out 15 volunteers but was able to attain 10 who qualified for my study. To ensure data, codes, and themes provided the rich, thick saturation. I aimed to understand the educators' lived experiences and how educators could give definition/meaning to the central phenomenon they had been experiencing so that others could learn from the lived experiences of educators who desired to carry concealed weapons in the school.

There were nine states identified, Idaho, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming, that exempt school personnel from weapons prohibitions on K-12 school grounds (Isbell et al., 2019; Lott, 2019; RAND Corporation. 2020). Vested interest theory by theorists (Crano, 1997) guided this study. This theory investigated the attitudes of persons highly vested in a position or situation and how those interests could influence the educators' behavior and attitudes.

Significance of the Study

Recognizing the growing threat posed by school shootings in the United States, educators must be ready to protect their students (Abel et al., 2022; Crawford, 2021; Hilaire et al. 2022; Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Warnick & Kapa, 2019). Educators cannot conceal weapons on school grounds in many states, such as North Carolina. After watching a school lose a classful of young students to a gunman, my belief grew greater to support conceal carrying in school. Although the law does not allow firearms on most K-12 school premises, educators need to have a fair chance (Aizenman, 2018; Gifford Law Center, 2018c). The legislation restricted anyone, even with concealed handgun permittees, from intentionally possessing a firearm, freely or concealed, on educational property or at a curricular or extracurricular program funded by a public or

private elementary school, community college, college, or university (*North Carolina General Assembly*, 2018; Bonner & Davidson 2018; Lott & Wang, 2020; Spitzer, 2017).

The rising frequency of school shootings makes this study crucial because of the far-reaching consequences it may have on all people. and of school shooting will understand educators' experiences that had led them to carry a weapon and how carrying a firearm could impact the safety and security of having a firearm. However, federal laws had not regulated districts and schools to develop and implement plans in the event of an emergency. Yet, federal and state governments did play a role in supporting an emergency district management plan.

The Education and Homeland Security departments also encouraged schools to have emergency plans. Data from 2012 urged the School Health Policies and Practices to implement emergency plans (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Kelly, 2017; United States Government Accountability Office, 2007). As of 2019, 40 states mandated school districts to have a school emergency plan (Jordan & Harper, 2020; Kruger et al., 2018).

This research contributed to the body of knowledge addressing Crano's (1997) vested interest theory regarding the theoretical viewpoint. Although vested interest theory had been used in self-defense contexts, this study could be applied to understanding K-12 educators to ascertain their degree of vested interest when they conceal carry on K-12 schools. Educators were viewed as protectors who strived tirelessly to ensure the safety of all students while they were learning in school (DeVos et al., 2018; Jagodzinski et al., 2018). The vested interest theoretical perspective helped to explore how vested educators who carry concealed firearms on K-12 school grounds perceive their vested interest in seeking safety and developing their own safety needs in the event of a shooter.

For this study, I applied the vested interest theory (Crano, 1997; Miller et al., 2013). The principle of vested interest theory had been extended to the self-defense context (Crano, 1997; Koester, 2019; Miller et al., 2013), which could allow educators to consider the degree of vested interest they could use if they needed to defend themselves (Minshew, 2018; Rajan & Branas, 2018; RAND Corporation, 2018; Rogers et al., 2018; Winston, 2016). As expected, there exists adamant vocal opposition in several states where legislatures were trying to enact laws to support school workers' carrying a weapon. There was a lack of robust and empirical evidence which supported the positive effect of educators to defend in the event of active shooter supported this case of those opposed to the policy of arming educators (Chrusciel et al., 2015). Moreover, Chrusciel et al. (2015) indicated that government officials placed the onus on educators to secure the school environment with weapons.

 The significance of this study revealed the motivation and experiences behind the desires educators had to carry concealed. This study assisted in exploring the various expectations and roles educators played if confronted with an active shooter. There was currently little research regarding the desires of educators who concealed carry in K-12 schools. At this time, no studies showed research had been conducted to understand the lived experiences of these educators. This study contributed to the increasing body of knowledge on this group educators who were conceal carrying educators.

Research Questions

The following research questions presented guided the study to gain insight into the experiences of educators choosing to carry a concealed weapons in school. Crano (1997) explained the concept of a phenomenological research study was more concerned with first-hand accounts of the phenomenon than resolving why the participants experienced life in the way they

do (Crano, 1997). This chapter restated the following central question and sub-questions to reaffirm their emphasis on study design and explicitly relate them to the methodology process. In preparing a phenomenological study, the researchers' first task was to arrive at a subject and issue of social significance and personal importance (Moustakas, 1994). In this research, I will devote time to developing keywords and focusing on both the central question and sub-questions in order to determine what was most important in pursuing the topic and what data was gathered (Moustakas, 1994).

Central Research Question

What were the lived experiences of educators who desired and who were licensed to carry concealed weapons in school?

The current literature reviewed had very little evidence on the desires addressing why` educators chose to carry concealed weapons. However, several states were identified where educators do conceal carry (Lott, 2019; Rajan & Branas, 2018; RAND Corporation, 2020). The research question looked to explore the reasons why an educator desired to carry a concealed weapon. It was necessary to consider the phenomenon from the educator's perspective in order to discover the meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Winston, 2016).

Sub- Question One

How does your desire to conceal carry a handgun at school empower your ability to defend yourself and others? What is the most significant issue you have with educators carrying concealed weapons in the school?

The question lined up with the central question referenced educators' desired to carry a concealed weapon in a K-12 school. The limited research on educators failed to address how educators in permitted states sense of identity was impacted by carrying concealed weapons in

school. The research question aimed to focus on the participant's desires and perceptions of the event or situation in which this study tried to answer the question of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2016; Winston, 2016; Yin, 2016).

Sub-Question Two

What specific experience (s) influenced educators' desires to conceal carry, and why do you believe educators should be allowed to conceal carry in a K-12 school? How does that impact your feelings of safety?

The limited research findings on the educators' sense of responsibility to ensure student safety while carrying a concealed weapon at school needs further study. Each school had its own distinctive school safety climate, which consisted of several strategies that were selected and enforced concurrently by the school district. Such techniques had many effects on the educational environment they intended to protect. Individuals who considered themselves highly vested also followed those behaviors, which related to a response (Crano, 1997; Vossekuil et al., 2016; Winston, 2016).

Sub- Question Three

How do you describe your experiences in correlation with the Second Amendment Rights, and how has it driven your beliefs and desire to protect and defend yourself and the school?

The limited research on educators' desires to carry concealed firearms could contribute to the self-defense and safety of others in school, which correlated with the central question (Winston, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed out that the essence of this research was the quest for the central underlying meaning of experience and stressed the intentionality of

awareness, where perception includes both the outward appearance and the inner consciousness, dependent on memory image, and interpretation.

Definitions

1. *Active shooter*- An active shooter is a suspect who sets out to actively cause death and severely injuring others instantly. The event is not contained, and the potential victims were immediately at risk of death or grave injury (Kelly, 2017).

2. *School shootings*- Multiple-victim homicides were taking place at schools. School shootings occur mainly in the developed, Western Nations School shootings had led to fear among students, parents, educators, and school officials. (Agnich, 2014).

3. *School shooting*- Most of these are done by teens and happen at school or in a place related to school, like the schoolyard or a school bus stop. The location is often chosen because it represents something important to the person who did it or because they want to show or feel powerful. (Lott, 2019; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; RAND Corporation, 2018; Silva, 2019).

Summary

Five states allowed guns on K-12 school premises, including Texas, Colorado, Montana, and Ohio, permitted armed teachers if the school board or charter school permitted. In other states, such as Indiana, individuals (teachers) who the school board had explicitly approved were permitted to carry weapons on school grounds (Short, 2019; RAND Corporation, 2018). The problem for this study concerned educators who desired to carry a firearm in K-12 schools in the state of North Carolina; the law did not allow firearms on school premises (*North Carolina General Assembly* 2018).

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of educators who had a desire to carry concealed a weapon to protect and defend themselves and others in the school. This study allowed educators who already had a concealed weapons to share their lived experiences from their perspective of why they desired to carry a weapon in school. Safety was an essential component of an individual's well-being (Baird et al., 2017).

The lack of literature on this subject showed a gap in addressing educators' who desired to conceal a firearm as a measure of defense in the event of a shooting crisis. The frequency of school shootings propels the need to study the phenomena of violent school incidents and the way educators should prepare to address carrying concealed weapons. This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of educators who supported carrying a weapon in school to deter an active shooter.

This chapter introduced the problem of the study. The research questions and information were presented in the research plan and the significance of the study. A summary of the literature is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

When conducting a research study, it was essential to ground the literature as the information could guide the research and identify gap that needed to be explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). One of the most critical aspects of the research process is the theoretical framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In qualitative research, Creswell and Poth (2018) maintained that using theories was essential because the method could help to formulate and understand the questions and findings. I applied a theoretical framework that helped organize the chapter. Employing a thorough research study can assist in ensuring that safety measures were implemented to deter further tragedy in our schools (Heale & Noble, 2019).

This literature review explored the educators' experiences with carrying a weapon and the reasons educators desired to carry a weapon in school. This literature review explored the benefits and disadvantages of having educators carry weapons in K-12 schools. The accompanying literature provided details on the topic as it applied to mass school shootings and considered educators' perspectives on carrying weapons in school and why they should or should not be permitted to carry in K-12 schools.

The chapter offered further details on the theoretical framework, vested interest theory. The related literature outlined the literature as it related to mass school shootings and the effects of educators carrying firearms in school. The chapter concluded with a summary.

Theoretical Framework

The accompanying literature review provided details on the topic as it applied to mass school shootings and considered educators' parents and communities' perspectives on educators carrying weapons in school and why they should or should not be permitted to carry them in K-

12 schools. The theoretical framework helped to establish the study's context and bolster up the investigation. The qualitative research and the theoretical framework context established the study's foundation in qualitative research, assisting the researchers in constructing a clear path extending the research to grow the data collection and questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Crano's (1983) vested interest theory assisted in guiding this study. The theory of vested Interest denoted that individuals' behavior becomes more passionate about a result of an entity (such as a law or policy) that significantly impacted their behavior. The individual may behave in a manner that explicitly promoted or defied the object for their own sake.

Vested Interest Theory

One of the most critical aspects of the research process was the theoretical framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014). In qualitative research, Creswell and Poth (2018) maintained that using theories was essential because it formulated and helped to understand the questions and findings. For this study, I applied Crano's theory to the body of literature vested interest theory (Crano, 1997; Johnson et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2013).

The principle of vested interest theory had been extended to the self-defense context (Crano, 1997; Koester, 2019; Miller et al., 2013), indicated the degree of vested interest educators could use if they needed to defend themselves in the event of a threatening situation. Crano (1997) stated that people who identified as having a vested interest often acted on their attitudes, which could evolve into a behavior. To be highly vested, each of the five attitudinal dimensions needed to be exhibited: stake, salience, certainty, immediacy, and self-efficacy (Crano et al., 2015; Godinez, 2018; Johnson et al., 2014; Mancini et al., 2020).

Sense of stake helped identify educators who desired to conceal carrying for prospects of protection and safety, and stake plays a role in how defensive and protective educators could be

utilized (Crano et al., 2015). As experiences could shape an individual's values, the saliency of

concealed carry could differ from person to person (Adame, 2015; Crano, 1997; Crano et al.,

2015; Godinez, 2018; Mancini et al., 2020). Certainty and immediacy could differ from

individual to individual, which had only one part of developing attitudes based on a mindset

(Adame, 2015; Crano et al., 2015). (Siegel et al., 2019; Stroebe et al., 2019).

The main benefits of a concealed carrier could vary depending on their personal beliefs

about security (Mancini et al., 2020; Metzl & Macleish, 2015). Miller et al. (2013) claimed that

even though the person could be concerned having strong beliefs, it does not mean the necessary

elements had developed all the full defense skills while they might have a defensive and

protective attitude (Crano et al., 2015; Godinez, 2018; Johnson et al., 2014). The educators

could be fearful and unable to protect or defend themselves or anyone, regardless of having a

weapon to protect (Siegel et al., 2019).

Additionally, if the other components of vested interest were limited or underdeveloped,

the fear could never become behavior, thus not preparing them to defend or protect (Adame,

2015; Crano et al., 2015). Self-efficacy is often cited in the concealed carry debate, but due to

the ability to affect change, should an event occurred while individuals were in the vicinity, their

ability to respond could change (Schwabe, 2018). Typically, when an individual had a concealed

carry permit, they carried their weapon with the intention of self-defense; should a situation

arose, they could be unable to respond (Strobe et al., 2017a).

As self-efficacy has strongly linked to educators' intentions to bear arms, educators had a

vested interest in their capacity as they were constantly ready to secure and defend themselves

and others (Strobe et al., 2019). When an educator's self-efficacy was mixed with a propensity

to bear a concealed firearm, the educator had a personal interest in the matter. They were always in safe and defense mode.

Related Literature

The literature for this research study was selected to explore why educators desire to carry a weapon in school. The articles sought to provide an understanding of the educators' desire to bring a firearm to school. The literature review could help uncover or answer questions about the causes of mass shootings and address plans to hinder active intruders. Fox and Fridel (2018) and Muhammad (2019) noted that mass media saturated the coverage of extreme violence in society, increasing the risk of violent behavior from the viewers. Law officials and administrators contemplated the best way to protect students and staff as they considered implementing a corrective action plan (Fox & Fridel, 2018: Mazer et al., 2015). Vossekuil et al. (2016) further acknowledged that the rise of school shootings in the United States had warranted further security policies.

This literature took an in-depth look at the law allowing Texas educators to conceal carry in their schools. Additionally, this study looked at reasons for the increase in mass shootings and educators' perceptions of carrying weapons in school. Duxbury et al. (2018) insisted that mental illness had become the predominant reason for mass shootings.

Schildkraut and Stafford (2016) agreed that the direct access of a shooter to gain firearms could also contribute to the frequency of shooting incidents, in addition to exogenous variables and mental health issues. The authors concluded that school violence directly impeded the teaching-learning process for educators and students (Hall, 2020; Mazer et al., 2015; Stuart, 2003). Current data explored on mass school shootings showed significant gap in the study

(Bonanno & Levenson, 2014). Metzl and Macleish (2015) pointed out that mass shootings had prompted the need for further investigation.

Attitudes/Perceptions

High-profile school shootings created significant media attention and public anxiety (Mazer et al., 2015). Legislators voiced their anger and pledged to implement stringent gun safety laws (Luca et al., 2020; Metzl & Macleish, 2015). About 3 million learners in the United States were exposed to annual shootings in their communities, schools, or public places (Short, 2019). Mass shootings in schools negatively affected the families of murdered students, surviving victims, and fellow learners who witnessed horrifying incidents (Short, 2019; Jones & Stone, 2015).

Why and How School Shootings Occur

Various factors inspired the incidences of school shootings. Some learners sought revenge on those who previously hurt them (Langman, 2018). Others intended to retaliate against those who bullied or made fun of them in the school setting. Raitanen et al. (2019) stated other students do not value life or feel worthless, highlighting a probable reason why some committed suicide after a school shooting. Besides, some students had been victims of abuse in their homes Langman, 2018; Madfis, 2017; Timm & Aydin, 2020).

They eventually expressed the inbuilt emotional disturbances violently. Psychic trouble indicators such as the absence of strong social connections and becoming exceedingly introverted could also motivate school shootings. Violent offenders were typically pessimistic about their future, were rejected by classmates and peers, were pressured by their teachers, or were suspended from their school. Such dynamics prompted them to explore violent measures

that resulted in loss of life, injuries, and property destruction (Raitanen et al., 2019; Rajan & Branas, 2018).

Previous school shootings had shown that the attackers carefully contemplated and planned for their mission to maximize fatalities and the intensity of the attack (DeVos et al. 2018Everytown for Gun Safety, 2019). The disturbed student or former student could decide to carry a concealed weapon in the school and commence the shooting inside the school compound (Farr, 2018; Raitanen et al., 2019). The weapon could be taken from home or acquired from the gun stores.

Traumatized shooters usually come from troubled homes and could had exposure to criminal behavior or substance abuse. Psychotic shooters could come from intact families but suffered from conduct disorder, mental illness, schizophrenia, or oppositional defiant disorder. Thus, attackers viewed violent school shootings as a means to emphasize their masculinity, become noticed, or regain the lost feelings of power, attention, and pride (Fox & Fridel, 2018; Metzl & Macleish, 2015). The disturbed student could opt to commit suicide or surrender to the police, depending on the underlying motive for the cruel action (Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2015).

The Voice of Educators and Other School Personnel

Teachers were usually excluded from the school safety narratives, yet they have first-hand accounts of their students (Short, 2019; Paolini, 2015). Educators were concerned with the rising cases of active shootings and other violent incidences in the school settings since the employed measures did not correlate with the current educational environment (Hughes, 2019; Paolini, 2015). Hughes (2019) maintained that educators viewed that school districts could be proactive in developing a more secured learning environment for all learners. It should balance

between safety, security, as well as awareness of existing or necessary security measures. Teachers claimed that students could be assisted in managing their emotions and demonstrating empathy to improve school safety (Hughes, 2019; Paolini, 2015). Thus, school safety plans were instrumental in overcoming significant incidences of violence as a definitive formula lacked to assure the learners' safety (RAND Corporation, 2018).

Police highly opposed to gun-free zones in schools. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School attack in 2012, PoliceOne, a 450,000-member and a private police organization of 380,000 active, full-time, and 70,000 retired officers, surveyed its members and discovered that 77% advocated arming teachers and school personnel (PoliceOne, 2013). Eighty-six percent of the law enforcement officers felt that if legally armed people had been allowed to carry firearms, fatalities in mass public shootings could have been decreased or eliminated.

In 2017-18, a quantitative study was conducted on superintendent perceptions of arming educators in Nebraska Public Schools was used to collect data for the research (Luca et al., 2020). The requirements for the study called for the demographic data of the school district's enrollment. The research included the state of Nebraska's 245 K-12 public school districts.

In this study the researchers asked open-ended questions on arming educators as part of the district's emergency response procedures. The overwhelming majority, 90 (81%) of the 111 responded to the questions and were against arming staff (Luca et al., 2020). Of the 90 responses, 73 stated there should not be firearms in schools, and 17 noted they were uncomfortable with armed teachers and staff but could tolerate an armed school resource officer or law enforcement officer carrying a weapon in schools. However, 21% of respondents agreed

that teachers and staff could be armed in schools, but only with appropriate training (Luca et al., 2020).

Attitudes/Perceptions About Shooting-Related Violence

High-profile school shootings created significant media attention and public anxiety. Legislators voiced their anger and pledged to implement stringent gun safety laws (Luca et al., 2020; Metzl & Macleish, 2015). About 3 million learners in the US were exposed to annual shootings in their communities, schools, or public places.

Mass shooting in schools had adverse effects on the families of murdered students, surviving victims, and the fellow learners who witnessed the horrifying incidents (Jones & Stone, 2015). The gun violence crisis underscored the need to understand why and how these shootings repeatedly occurred in the school setting (Short, 2019). The assessment covered the background context leading to this point, the perspective of educators and school personnel, underlying attitudes, possible interventions, and teachers' intention to carry concealed guns in the school environment.

History of Arming Educators in the School Setting

Lott and Wang (2020) noted that there were minimal restrictions on the possession of firearms around school property. It was not uncommon for learners to carry guns in school, utilize them for hunting or target practice, and engaged in school-sanctioned rifle clubs. Antonin Scalia, a Supreme Court justice, reflected on his childhood in the 1950s in New York City. As a former rifle squad member, he proudly admitted to transporting a weapon to and from school each day (Lott & Wang, 2020). However, many states had adopted legislation prohibiting firearms on school property due to more stringent and uniform gun laws (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Lott & Wang, 2020).

Policymakers explored possible ways to minimize gun violence in schools, especially after shooting incidences. The school shootings had led leaders to focus on the prospect of arming school educators as a second line of defense in an active shooter situation (Springer, 2018; Winston, 2016). Before the Sandy Hook Massacre and the controversial gun control debates began, gun laws in some states did not address the possibility of schools allowing educators or school personnel to carry weapons (Elliott, 2015; Tatman, 2019).

Many states had a patchwork of legislation that differed regarding those permitted to bring firearms to the school setting (Butkus, 2020; Kolbe, 2020; Lott, 2019). Many states lacked laws mandating arming educators. Yet, no regulations prohibited educators from carrying a firearm (Rostron, 2014). The situation is complicated by the fact that some educators believed that they were responsible for teaching duties, not security provisions for their students.

After the Columbine High School massacre, school administrators and local police departments commenced collaborative efforts. They sought to galvanize police officers as school resource officers or in-house school personnel as a first-line defense against potential threats (Ames-Lopez, 2020; Goff, 2019; Johnson & Christensen, 2019; Tatman, 2019; Tillman, 2020). Richmond (2019) stated arming educators was not an entirely new idea for some school districts. Some states, including Kansas, South Dakota, and Tennessee, allowed school personnel, including educators, to carry firearms. A decade before the Sandy Hook School shooting, school employees in Utah could carry concealed weapons on campus (Short, 2019; Lott & Wang, 2020; RAND Corporation, 2018; Uliano, 2019).

It is reported that at least four Texas school districts had allowed selected staff to carry concealed weapons in the school compound (Beggan, 2019; Hunter, 2018). In Harrold, a rural Texas school district, educators carry weapons, considering the long distance it took police

officers to respond to a potential threat at a school district (Lott & Wang, 2020; Uliano, 2019; Walker & Sampson, 2018; Winston, 2016). Thus, having educators carry weapons in the school setting is based on an interplay of factors.

After the shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, Dennis Daugaard, South Dakota's governor, signed a law authorizing educators to legally carry firearms in schools to quickly respond to an active shooter threat (Abbinante, 2017; Ames-Lopez, 2020; Goff, 2019; Johnson & Christensen, 2019; Kiely, 2021; Matushin, 2019; Tillman, 2020; Uliano, 2019). People opposed to arming educators expressed concerns about the likelihood of accidental injuries since educators were not trained on security provision dynamics. Rostron (2014) indicated school safety advocated viewed South Dakota's law as a means of empowering school districts and preventing further injury and loss of life. Other states followed in mandating educators to carry guns in the school compound.

At least eight states allowed educators to possess a firearm on K-12 school premises. The Education Commission of the States monitors and tracked legislation and noted that states approved armed educators include Kansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming (Beggan, 2019; Education Commission of the States, 2019; Hunter, 2018; Kiely, 2021; Matushin, 2019). Six states adopted the legislation in 2018. They included Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Maryland, and Oklahoma (Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Hunter, 2018).

There is no certified count of the number of educators carrying firearms at schools. Nevertheless, some school districts had publicly disclosed they had armed employee programs (Abbinante, 2017; Rajan & Branas, 2018; RAND Corporation, 2018; Rivas, 2018). Such institutions do not divulge the information to avoid alerting potential shooters or evoking fear in parents and students. Though the program provided professional firearm training for educators,

educators had to purchase registered firearms (Hobbs & Brody, 2018). The history of arming educators in the school setting implied that guaranteeing school safety required a multi-stakeholder effort (Uliano, 2019; Walker & Sampson, 2018; Winston, 2016).

Laws Allowing Firearms in Texas in K-12 Schools

Shootings at various K-12 schools shook the nation because these institutions were believed to be safe havens. Therefore, different states in the United States allowed teachers to carry concealed weapons (Isbell et al., 2019; Lott, 2019; Stone, 2017; Newman & Hartman, 2019). Lott (2018) indicated that allowing educators and staff members to carry concealed weapons was nothing new in the country and had not developed any problems.

Lott (2018) explained that before the 1990s, there were no policies in states specifically preventing the carrying of weapons on K-12 properties. Lott (2019) suggested that by December 2019, the number of school districts that allowed teachers to carry concealed weapons was 315. Notably, this represented 30% of the school districts in the state (Lott, 2019). Therefore, nearly all of Texas started embraced carrying weapons on K-12 property (Beggan, 2019; Hunter, 2018; Kelly, 2017; Parsons, 2020).

Isbell et al. (2019) argued that the policies for arming educators varied in the country because they were drafted based on state requirements and enacted by district officials. Isbell et al. (2019) indicated that Texas was one of the states where these regulations were currently enacted. Texas Governor Greg Abbott gave out his bid named "School and Firearm Safety Action Plan" for local districts in May 2018 (Beggan, 2019; Hunter, 2018; Isbell et al., 2019; Kelly, 2017; Parsons, 2020).

Nonetheless, this plan was not the first to be established by Texas lawmakers in response to school shootings. For example, in 2007, Texas legislators created a policy that was commonly

known as the "Guardian Plan," which was developed after there were shootings in Pennsylvania Amish and Virginia Tech schools (Isbell et al., 2019; Lott, 2019; Stone, 2017; Newman & Hartman, 2019). In 2013, the Texas Marshal Plan, also known as the Protection of Texas Children Act, was created after the murder of 28 learners and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary school (Isbell et al., 2019; Lott, 2019; Parsons, 2020). The laws were aimed at encouraging the carrying of weapons in K-12 schools. Morse et al. (2016) indicated that in 2015, Texas was the first state that implemented legislation allowing concealed guns in schools. Nonetheless, the enactment process of these laws varied across districts.

Sandersen et al. (2018) explained that the idea that people felt safe in schools is a false idealization when assessed based on tragic events that happened in these institutions. Sandersen et al. (2018) explained that towards the end of the 84th legislative session, Texas lawmakers passed a law allowing educators to carry concealed guns on campuses. Short (2018) argued that although Texas is known for its gun rights, it also has a history of regulating firearm possession dating to 1866. Nonetheless, for the first time in over 100 years, the Texas legislature passed legislation in 1995 that enabled people to carry concealed guns (Reed, 2019; Rivas, 2018; Short, 2019).

In Texas, serious efforts to introduce campus carry regulations began in 2009 and persisted until the bill was enacted in 2015. The push enabled handguns in Texas schools to gain momentum in 2011 (Short, 2019; Steidley, 2019). The most promising of the 2011 legislative efforts was originally Senate Bill 354, co-authored by Senator Jeffrey Wentworth and approved by the Texas governor (Reed, 2019; Rivas, 2018; Short, 2019).

The bill was aimed at giving faculty members, staff, and students a way to defend themselves. Lovell (2018) showed that the Texas legislature (Senate Bill 11) passed in 2015

allowed citizens with a permit to carry a concealed weapon. Nevertheless, this did not mean that

all schools participated in this movement (Nodeland & Saber, 2019; Plakon, 2019; Reed, 2019;

Rivas, 2018).

The law required that a school guardian undergo a psychological assessment, initial drug

testing, and other random drug tests (Isbell et al., 2019; Lott, 2019; Parsons, 2020). Notably,

these evaluations ensured that guns do not get into the wrong hands in schools (Parsons, 2020).

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement had not reported any negligent discharge for any of the

schools that had enacted the Marshal program. Despite the ongoing debate about the campus

carry legislation, Senate Bill 11 was enacted on August 1, 2016 (Barfield, 2019; Everytown for

Gun Safety, 2019; RAND Corporation, 2020).

The bill was specific to certain campuses, which meant that not all schools had allowed

educators to carry concealed guns on their premises (Lott, 2019; Nodeland & Saber, 2019;

Plakon, 2019; Reed, 2019; Short, 2019). Luca and Poliquin (2020) indicated that Texas

expanded the Marshal Program, which trained educators to carry weapons, after the shooting at

Santa Fe High School. However, Butcher (2020) showed that a qualifying school must send its

teachers to an 80-hour course for a candidate to qualify for this program. The course is

performed by officers who had been trained to offer a school marshal curriculum (Butcher, 2020;

Short, 2019; Newman & Hartman, 2019).

Rivas (2018) indicated that the politicians who postulated arming educators to solve gun

violence based their argument on the Second Amendment. Therefore, the laws that supported

the carrying of guns to K-12 schools focused on promoting a culture of self-protection, such that

when a criminal entered school premises, the teachers could defend their learners. As a result,

teachers were given the freedom to carry concealed weapons (Isbell et al., 2019; Lott, 2019;

Stone, 2017; Newman & Hartman, 2019). Miller et al. (2017) explained that the gun policy had

transpired in the United States over the last decades, making it easy for people to get these

weapons in several states.

State legislation concerning carrying weapons in public had changed in two main ways.

First, states in the nation were oriented on "shall issue" and "may issue" legislation. The "shall

issue" legislation informed authorities to issue gun permits to individuals after meeting the

lowest criteria for carrying weapons (Plakon, 2019; Reed, 2019; Rivas, 2018; Strobe et al., 2017;

Steidley, 2019; Wolfson et al., 2017).

Conversely, "may issue" regulations informed the local enforcement agency to demand

that applicants showed the reason for carrying concealed weapons. Secondly, some states in the

nation had expanded areas where individuals could carry concealed. As a result, Texas is one of

the states extending this privilege to teachers in K-12 schools (DeMitchell, & Rath, 2019; Drake

& Yurvati, 2018; Nodeland & Saber, 2019; Newman & Hartman, 2019).

Mass Shootings in America

Reports conducted showed an unclear consensus for the definition of a mass school

shooting (Blair & Schwieit, 2014; Butt et al., 2019; Levine & McKnight, 2021; Paradice, 2017).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2013) released an unsupported explanation for the term,

describing "mass school shootings" as "the killing of four or more people in the same school

environment." Lin et al. (2018) defined a mass shooting as an act of firearm violence that

resulted in at least four fatalities (not including the perpetrator) at the same time or over a

relatively short period in the case of shooting sprees. Nevertheless, Madfis (2016)

acknowledged that these mass shootings in America had altered traditional school culture.

Understanding the real essence of a mass shooting and its characteristics had helped

address ways to counteract mass school shooting incidents. The FBI reported that the frequency

of mass shooting incidents had grown over the past 14 years (Baird et al., 2017). From January

1, 2013, to December 31, 2015, 154 school shootings occurred in the United States (Kalesan et

al., 2017).

Warnick and Kapa (2019) indicated that the number of children and adolescents killed on

United States school campuses did not exceed 2% of the number of young people who died due

to violent death. In 1993, the number of homicides in American educational institutions reached

a maximum of 34 cases per year. Katsiyannis et al. (2018) found that mass school shootings

resulted in student and faculty deaths have risen and concluded that adequate safety measures

needed to be in place.

Multiple school shootings continued to be problematic in American schools (Baird et al.,

2017). Kelly (2017) realized the challenges facing leaders to identify effective strategies were

needed to safeguard learners and educators. A secure school environment ensured an

atmosphere conducive to the teaching and learning process (Paolini, 2015).

K-12 School Shooter Characteristics

The mass school shooter was characterized as a white male with an average age of 16,

brought up in a middle-class suburban or rural family, with no mental illness, disability, or

retardation (Sheeran et al., 2017; Silva & Green, 2019; Stuart, 2003; Rasmussen Reports, 2018).

The shooter was known to have attachment difficulties, is very interested in violence, but had no

history of violent behavior. He meets the clinical diagnosis for atypical depression and mixed

personality disorder with paranoid, antisocial, and narcissistic features.

He invested a lot of time immersed in violent fantasies and is carefully planning a mass

murder. The issue usually occurs by rejection or punitive action (Drake & Yurvati, 2018; Kerr,

2018). Drake and Yurvati (2018) argued that a high propensity for mass killings might be present in children who lived in dysfunctional families with no mutual trust or close relations.

Quintero (2021) stated that educators and administrators who understand the characteristics of a prospective attacker could assist successfully in detecting a probable gun shooter and performed threat assessments before a violent incident occurrence. The shooter also invested a lot of time immersed in violent fantasies and carefully planned mass murder. The issue usually occurs by rejection or punitive action (Kerr, 2018). Drake and Yurvati (2018) argued that a high propensity for mass killings might be presented in children who lived in dysfunctional families or families with no mutual trust or close relations (Quintero, 202; Farr, 2018; Samuels, 2018).

Warnick and Kapa (2019) indicated that the number of children and adolescents killed in the United States on school campuses did not exceed 2% of the number of young people who died due to violent death. In 1993, the number of homicides in American educational institutions reached a maximum of 34 cases per year (Kolbe, 2020). Paolini (2015) examined 37 mass shootings, in which out of those, there were some common characteristics among the incidents. The study revealed the attackers were mainly males, and 95% of them were current students, and 5% were former students. Findings also showed the attackers worked alone in 81% of the incidents.

Mass shooting incidences in learning institutions implied that schools were under siege. Gun violence had transformed into a pervasive issue that had intensified over the years. (Liu and Wiebe, 2019; Paolini, 2015). Leading factors behind school shootings included bullying, non-compliance, or side effects from psychiatric drugs (Paolini, 2015; Raitanen et al., 2019). Bullying victims usually experienced feelings of humiliation, making them entertain revenge or

suicidal inclinations.

Some shooters under psychiatric medications demonstrate compliance (Graham, 2014; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2015; (Jones & Stone, 2015). Others on psychiatric drugs for their mental health disorders experience the side effects of such medicines before carrying out elaborate school shooting incidences. In case a school shooter was not under hallucinations, the school massacre could be attributed to immoral or rational solutions (Madfis, 2017; Ortega-Barón et al., 2019; Paolini, 2015).

Student Mental Health Issues, Antisocial Behavior

The prevalence of school shootings underscored the need for awareness to understand such actions' short and long-term consequences. Moreover, comprehending the trend was necessary to stress to school counselors' role in establishing a safe learning environment for all students (Ortega-Barón et al., 2019; Swanson et al., 2020; Paolini, 2015; Jones & Stone, 2015). Student mental health issues were related to mass school shootings (Hall, 2020; Lu & Temple, 2019; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2015; Jonson et al., 2021; Moffitt, 2018). Learners grappling with mental health illnesses were at an increased risk of suicide and become primary perpetrators of mass school shootings. Student mental health issues were related to mass school shootings (Lu & Temple, 2019; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2015).

Learners with mental health disorders were at a heightened risk for suicide and were the major perpetrators of school shootings (American Psychological Association, 2013; Baumann & Teasdale, 2018; Lu & Temple, 2019; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2015; Jones & Stone, 2015). Most mass public killers suffered from aggravated mental health concerns before they instigated an attack (Metzl & Macleish, 2015). They usually demonstrated troubling signs, including paranoia and delusional thinking, or had irrational feelings of oppression due to bipolar

psychosis or schizophrenia.

For instance, the Virginia Tech shooter, Sandy Hook perpetrator, and the Parkland shooter had underlying mental health issues, yet none received psychiatric interventions before the high-profile shootings (Hall et al., 2019; Lu & Temple, 2019; Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2015). The primary concern is not the increased number of assault weapons on the hands of the public but the prevalence of untreated mental health conditions that prompted the affected individuals to become gradually violent in unexpected ways (Baumann & Teasdale, 2018; Hall et al., 2019; Lu & Temple, 2019).

Aggression against others and a propensity to carry out mass shootings could be predicted by antisocial behavior. Notably, antisocial mannerisms entailed disruptive acts usually inspired by overt and covert aggression (Bostwick, 2013; Moffitt, 2018). There were incidences of calculated aggressiveness towards other people. In some instances, it could be hostile behavior against others intended. It spans a severity continuum that involved violations of established social norms, disregarding authorities, deceitfulness, and contempt for others (Baird et al., 2017; Berrebi & Yonah, 2021).

Young people with antisocial personality disorders could display a troubled psychiatric history. They had minimal empathy or concern for others except themselves. They lack compassion capacity, resulting in unbelievable acts that defy social norms and expectations (Moffitt, 2018). Thus, they could commence a mass shooting spree after the antisocial personality behavior, or an immediate episode triggered the disorder. Such incidents could make them feel angry or overly dejected. Combined with easy access to a weapon, this could be translated into a catastrophic mass school shooting (Baird et al., 2017; Berrebi & Yonah, 2021).

Mental Health and Mass School Shootings

The news media highlighted the school shootings to help get a comprehensive profile of the perpetrator and understand the motivations for the mass murder. The mass murder phenomenon in the school setting could be influenced by mental health issues, such as depression or psychosis. Bostwick (2013) emphasized mentally ill individuals pose minimal risks of violence, though mass murders had underlying psychopathology compared to killers in other categories.

Understanding the offenders' mental health was crucial since the general public in the United States believed that school shootings resulted from mental illnesses (Whaley, 2020). Considering the intensity of gun violence in US learning institutions, mental health assessments were necessary. Bonanno and Levenson (2014) stressed that possible causes of violence included a combination of drug use, sociopathic character, and mental illness. Such factors could be considered for an understanding of causal factors in horrific school shooting incidences.

The frequency of fatal school shooting incidences has significantly risen (Towers et al., 2015; Warnick & Kapa, 2019). Warnick and Kapa (2019) established that the number of murders in US educational institutions peaked at 34 cases per year from 1993. There were racial disparities as white males committed most of the mass shooting incidences. Assessing underlying demographics was necessary to understand access to guns, cultural background, and socioeconomic circumstances (Yamane, 2017).

Patton (2002) maintained young, white males with suicidal tendencies or contemplating homicide were likely to become active shooters. Besides, most shooters use lawfully owned guns and were either students or former students at the targeted school. Most Americans believed that mental illnesses were to blame for school-related school shootings (DeAngelis,

2018; Fox & Fridel, 2018).

Towers et al. (2015) established that mass school shootings intensified due to the lack of access to adequate mental healthcare. The researchers added that individuals with emotional and mental instabilities might not had access to helpful resources provided by mental health professionals. The disconnect meant such people could feel alienated and entertained gun violence imaginations, leading to fatal school shootings.

The root causes of school shootings must be uncovered to develop effective interventions to prevent such tragedies. Kelly (2017) underlined the need to uncover school shooters' motivations. Increased school shooting incidents raised concerns about the safety of institutions expected to provide a conducive learning and enriched environment. This trend underscored the need to evaluate the deviance in students in recognizing troubled students.

Nevertheless, inadequate access to mental healthcare providers had influenced the escalating school shooting cases (Metzl & Macleish, 2015). These concerns stressed the need to offer school-based behavioral health screening services. The aim was to lower and eventually eliminate targeted violence in school settings (Defoster & Swalve, 2018; Vossekuil et al., 2016).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) shared a framework specifying the need for enhanced school safety. The organization advocated for improved access to mental health services among the learners (Lenhardt et al., 2018). School personnel must identify and respond to warning signs from a student threatening to commit a violent act and respond appropriately (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016; Tanner et al., 2018; Torres, 2016; Vossekuil et al., 2016).

Mental illness was not the sole factor behind gun crimes (Bostwick, 2013). Patton (2002) found that shooters and their victims come from households with differing levels of academic

performance, parental discipline, and parental involvement. The profile of a mass shooter might

involve boys likely to use firearms and suffer from self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Besides,

white children were more likely than children of color to use a gun at an earlier age (Obeng,

2010).

Black teens were more likely to be victims of gun violence. Thus, the motives behind

gun crimes could be detected in advance (Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Pierre, 2019). Identifying

troubled students required careful observation. Besides, it could entail freely interacting with

students to ensure they shared their struggles and disturbing experiences. Most school shooting

perpetrators do not have a mental illness diagnosis or a known history of drug or alcohol abuse

(Metzl et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, many perpetrators demonstrated suicidal tendencies involving depression

or a history of family problems. For instance, the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting led to

the deaths of 24 students and six adult staff members (Silva & Greene, 2019; Rasmussen

Reports, 2018). After the horrifying rampage, the active shooter opted to commit suicide.

The mainstream media had documented major shootings and connected the active shooter

with mental health challenges (Kambam et al., 2020; Vargas et al., 2020). Kambam et al.

(2020) and Vargas et al. (2020) sought to establish whether the public supported prohibiting

individuals diagnosed with mental illness from carrying firearms. A significant proportion of the

respondents believed that mental health patients needed to be barred from owning firearms. The

researchers recommended imposing fines on weapons dealers selling guns to mentally ill buyers.

Furthermore, Metzl and Macleish (2015) held a similar opinion. They argued that

individuals with mental illness should not have access to weapons. The public awareness was

commendable, considering mass shootings in a school setting affect the students, their families,

and the school community. The disturbing experiences worsened the survivors' and the victims' emotional and mental well-being, leading to psychological illnesses. The existing regulations discouraged the selling of weapons to people with a history of mental disturbances. Nevertheless, Swanson et al. (2020) established that people with mental health ailments could easily access guns.

The connection between gun violence and mental disorders required a proactive policy backed by punitive measures to discourage irresponsible use and possession of firearms. Though gun ownership was previously perceived as the reason for homicide, mental illness should be treated as a factor among other features when implementing gun violence preventive measures in the school setting (Adelmann, 2019; Swanson et al., 2020).

The political class rarely provided a reliable go-ahead likely to address gun violence in the school setting. Many legislators were cautious of the influential gun lobbies. The pro-gun ownership advocates argued that a good guy with a firearm can quickly stop a bad guy from conducting mass shootings in a school (M'Bareck, 2019; Reed, 2019). Current gun ownership regulations required licensed dealers, not unlicensed sellers, to conduct background checks before selling weapons to ascertain whether the individual was a restricted buyer (Cowan & Cole, 2020; Miller et al., 2017; Teasley, 2018; Vernick et al., 2017; Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2017). The goal was to promote prevention and intervention programs since establishing whether an individual poses a threat to society can highlight the likelihood of gun violence (Cowan & Cole, 2020; Miller et al., 2019; Perkins, 2018; Teasley, 2018).

Nevertheless, there were limitations. Federal legislation cannot mandate states to ensure that gun sellers provide buyer information (Swanson et al., 2016; Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2017). The federal law cannot coerce states to produce documents for gun dealers and buyers in case of

background checks.

Besides, individual states may be unwilling to send the appropriate data to the Nationwide Instant Criminal Background Check Program of the Federal Bureau of Investigations. Such discrepancies complicate the process of identifying individuals banned from owning firearms due to their mental health statuses. In such a way, mentally ill individuals could exploit the loopholes, bypass background checks, and acquired firearms, posing threats to schools and society.

Psychological Effects

Gun violence had left a long-lasting psychological trauma. Notably, the disturbance affected victims' and perpetrators' social, emotional, and cognitive functioning (Defoster & Swalve, 2018; Farr, 2018; Pirelli et al., 2020; Schwabe, 2018). Schoolchildren exposed to gun violence usually experience varying psychological challenges, including anger, post-traumatic stress, and withdrawal. Patton (2002) caution that such effects could eventually feed into a continuous cycle of violence due to sensitization.

Desensitization to violence and its impact could inspire a trend where students use violence to resolve issues or express their emotions. Fagan (2019) questioned the need for educators to carry firearms in schools. The concern could also be evaluated from a psychological perspective considering the experiences of minority students with police officers and other learners who could witnessed a mass shooting (Cowan & Cole, 2020; Teasley, 2018).

Various school shooting occurrences shown that the victims come from diverse backgrounds, social classes, and households with varying discipline issues (Flannery et al., 2020; Malcolm & Swearer, 2018). Most of the perpetrators had no mental illness diagnosis, abused alcohol or narcotics. However, a significant proportion of these people showed suicidal

tendencies, depression, and personal or family problems (Metzl & Macleish, 2015; Paolini, 2020; Swanson, 2016).

Thus, a detailed demographic profile of school shooters was necessary to identify at-risk students (Obeng, 2010). Some policymakers suggest arming educators with firearms. Many youths were directly and indirectly exposed to gun violence. Mitchell et al. (2019) acknowledged such exposure could entail serving as a witness to a shooting incidence or the sound of gunshots in the community setting. Drake and Yurvati (2018) cautioned that arming educators with firearms could easily create a tense environment and hurt students' academic achievements.

Suggested Solutions

School administrators and policymakers could utilize the perception of main stakeholders to implement relevant firearm violence prevention measures. Payton et al. (2017) stress the need for families to become involved in the wellbeing of their children, observe their wellbeing, and teach them morals. Primary prevention is effective in eradicating gun violence in schools and entails blocking youths from accessing firearms. Tatman (2019) stressed the need to strengthen gun laws by requiring those seeking firearm licenses to prove mental stability and justify the need for a gun. Restricting possession and use of firearms is a steppingstone to ensuring they do not get into the school compound.

Consequently, federal, state, and local authorities should ensure mental health resources were readily available in schools to ease access to at-risk learners. Kamenetz (2018) stressed the need to lower discrimination and bullying in schools by encouraging learners to speak up, tracking data, and performing regular threat assessments to ensuring violent students were identified and assisted. Strict gun control measures should be complemented by enhanced school

security. Metal detectors should be employed, and rules adjusted to ensure every visitor

undergoes thorough background checks (Newman & Hartman, 2019: Verrecchia et al.,

2017). The strategies should be continually evaluated, and timely adjustments made in line with

the unfolding threat dynamics.

School resource officers

In the early to mid-1950s, the school resource officer (SRO) system started in the US but

only in the 1990s, after numerous school shootings. The plan used SRO in the schools not

popular (Counts et al., 2018). The national statistics noted 35% of schools in America had SRO

in the schools (elementary, middle, or high school), and urbanicity (rural, town, suburban, or

city) or schools was based on their size. President Obama implemented one of the first plans that

addressed the mass school shootings after the Sandy Hook massacre. The response to recent

school shootings had led to a public debate on measures to improve school safety. The primary

emphasis entailed the involvement of school resource officers.

President Obama announced an executive action in January 2013, which proposed a

reform plan to install up to 1,000 more SRO and counselors in public schools and incentive

measures to keep them employed as regular staff at the school (Paolini, 2015). School Resource

Officers serve in a liaison capacity as police officers appointed to several area public schools in a

municipality to ensure students' and staff's safety. School protection liaisons should be

professionally qualified to represent educational institutions. As highly trained public servants,

their diverse job responsibilities include mentoring, law enforcement, and teaching (Counts et al.,

2018). They patrolled the school grounds and investigated alleged criminal complaints.

Teaching duties entailed facilitating educational programs to prevent criminal behavior for at-

risk populations, such as Gang Resistance Education and Training.

Sawchuk (2022) explained that SRO was a different form of a civil servant; they were described as a diverse discipline of correction and law enforcement. SRO represented a costly school operation without clear scientific evidence about its efficacy (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). The researchers stated that the roles of SRO could differ from one community to the next, making it difficult to formulate a uniform list of SRO tasks.

SRO's duties were not clear and could be grouped into three general categories: (1) safety specialist and law enforcement officer, (2) troubleshooter and connection to community services, and (3) educator. The earlier school shooting was the reason Former President Obama initiated a program to combat gun violence and safeguard children and educators by providing multiple federal incentives. The incentives were designed to allow schools to hire more SRO and counselors throughout the United States (Theriot & Orme, 2016; Zhang et al., 2016).

Theriot and Orme (2016) discussed utilizing SRO as the centerpiece to Obama's plan to improve school safety after the Sandy Hook shooting. Another study conducted by Jagodzinski et al. (2018) agreed that school resource officers were viewed as helpful, essential, and efficient in stopping school violence. Participants in the study felt safer when they were in schools. Since the initiative, School Resource Officers were regularly involved in public schools in the United States; 43% of all public schools had safety personnel. At least once a week, SRO impacted over 70% of students worldwide (Zhang et al., 2016). The school-police partnership had intensified in the United States over the past decade.

Most federal funding had been used to improve security and combat violent behavior observed in the schools (Kelly, 2017). Researchers Chrusciel et al. (2015) argued that a well-received policy proposal concerning the use of SRO challenged whether more police force improved protection in schools. Researchers found that SRO had been praised for being a

deterrent to school violence and central to coordinating the initial response in the case of a sudden attack (Counts et al., 2018; Jagodzinski et al., 2018). A proposal to increase SRO had been recommended to enhance school safety and reduce incidences before severe harm is caused in another school attack (Zirkel, 2019).

Evidence from recent studies suggested that all schools needed to be equipped with SRO, and high schools needed to have at least two monitoring the school (Jagodzinski et al. 2018). Data from a survey (Chrusciel et al., 2015) revealed law enforcement and principal respondents agreed to have SRO in their jurisdiction/district public schools effectively preserve school safety. Additional evidence pointed to a positive connection between school safety enhancements and the perception of the safety measures used in school to protect and prevent school shootings viewed by parents, educators, and staff.

The report aimed to provide suggestions to district leaders to better guide choice-making on protection upgrades in emergency response costs. The outcome of this study showed that protective measures and procedures were regarded favorably by the participants' (Burton et al., 2021; Chrusciel et al., 2015; Jonson et al., 2021; Kelly, 2017). The results were further confirmed by providing a detailed, regular, revised emergency management plan. School security officers monitoring the school, ballistic glass, and video across the school were needed to keep the school safe (DeVos et al., 2018; Jagodzinski et al., 2018). Additionally, the study results indicated that the interviewees believed that school safety was the responsibility of law enforcement.

Most law enforcement executives acknowledged that school safety was the responsibility of law enforcement, and only a minority of principals' side with this assertion (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; Jagodzinski et al., 2018). Also, law enforcement leaders and principals stated

they agreed that SRO should be utilized to protect and secure the school's safety. There was

disagreement on training educators and administrators to carry and shoot weapons effectively

(Chrusciel et al., 2015). Livingston et al. (2018) continued to search for evidence showing that

recruiting resource officers for schools reduced school incidents.

One primary concern addressed by parents was law enforcement officers freezing under

pressure, which came into the spotlight after reports and footage showed the school resource

officer at the Parkland, Florida school massacre, fleeing the building as fatal shots were fired

(Jagodzinski et al., 2018). SRO carried out various tasks that could benefit school safety.

A nationwide school study showed that schools with SRO have a higher rate of law

enforcement interaction than schools without appointed officers (James & McCallion, 2013;

Sawchuk, 2022). A national survey conducted showed schools and law enforcement agencies

agreed educators and law enforcement had different perspectives on the need for SRO (Burton et

al., 2021; Chrusciel et al., 2015; Counts et al., 2018). Four participants believed that school

violence was heightened due to SRO in the school (Sawchuk, 2022).

Kelly (2017) discussed administrators and school principals preserved the safety of

schools so that the learners and educators were secure in fostering a healthier atmosphere for

education. Chrusciel et al. (2015) suggested no attempt was made to empirically understand the

views of those directly affected by school security and policy decisions. There was a disparity in

the opinions of school principals about school SRO in the schools.

The evidence suggested school resource officers (SRO) provided a visible, armed,

uniformed presence for the school systems (Burton et al., 2021; Chrusciel et al., 2015; Sawchuk,

2022). However, many argued that armed law enforcement failed to adequately safeguard

students and staff (Theriot & Orme, 2016; Stroebe et al., 2017). Both law enforcement officials

and administrators advocated the usage of SRO as tools to ensure a safe school environment.

McKenna et al. (2016) acknowledged that SROs were seen as much more than law enforcement officers in schools. Researchers at Texas State University interviewed a group of SRO from Texas. They discovered that, in addition to their role as law enforcement officers, 46% of SRO, 38% social workers, 38% as educators, and 35% as surrogate parents (Sawchuk, 2022).

However, school-based policing opponents contended that school police were a high cost and could have potentially adverse effects for students, educators, and personnel (Petrosino et al., 2014). Stroebe et al. (2017) concluded that SRO's presence outweighed the risk of not having them present. Above all, the research indicated that most school officials appreciated the presence of SRO in the current climate, including the stakeholders for all in a safe learning environment (Stroebe et al., 2017). Kelly (2017) pointed out the difference of opinions arises on the needs of SRO in school.

Implementation of safety measures

State governments had a vital role in the safety of schools and students. Situational crime prevention and compliance measures had been implemented in schools to deter mass shootings (Kerr, 2018; Peterson & Densley, 2019). These shootings had contributed to the demands of safety in all schools, ensuring students and staff did not become victims (Rygg, 2015). Jonson (2017) believed that many school administrators implemented safety policies too quickly in fear that violence could escalate, later findings showed that the security procedures failed rigorous testing. Crawford and Burns (2015) noted that legislative actions had been ratified to improve the policies and tackle gun violence.

The National Center for Education Statistics had held the primary source of national data

regarding violence and victimization in education (Brock et al., 2018). Brock et al. (2018) noted since Columbine, safety provisions such as security cameras monitor the traffic of entrance and exit access into school buildings during school hours. A survey conducted showed that 11% of students in urban areas reported using metal detectors at the entrance of the school building (Schildkraut & Stafford, 2016).

Peterson and Densley (2019) stated the suggested approaches to public screenings were expensive, harmful, unproven, and inconsistent with scientific evidence, maintaining that in the 20 years after Columbine, the number of mass casualty shootings during schools did not drop but had become more lethal. Contrary to Everytown for Gun Safety (2019) recommended that schools resorted to using weapon detection systems to thwart a potential attack before the damage of mass shootings occurred. Clear policy frameworks and plans were devised to manage potential school violence, including adopting critical incidence plans (Short, 2019).

School security measures advancements

Upon hire, educators and school administrators assumed legal accountability, called "duty-of-care," toward each student enrolled in that institution. Therefore, schools provided a safe and secure learning environment for many generations of students (Fox & Fridel, 2018). In order to continue the precedent, many schools had begun to adopt the use of advanced security technologies (Saunders, 2016; Sawchuk, 2022). The United States Governance Accountability Office (USGAO) had not provided specific federal guidelines requiring a school district to have a formulated emergency management plan (Cornell, 2020; Perkins, 2018). Also, there were no particular standards for school officials to assess the effectiveness of safety contractors who developed safety interventions ensuring that schools were protected (Hevia, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015).

After the Sandy Hook shooting incident, a multi-stakeholder effort involving the federal government, state, and campus law enforcement agencies addressed and implemented needed changes to the school policies and procedures (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017). However, it had been recommended that school districts adopt an emergency management plan and collaborate with first responders annually (Crawford & Burns, 2015). Safety drills were deemed necessary to equip students and educators with the skills needed to respond to the exercises adequately in an emergency (Perkins, 2018). Training in the school was intended to ensure that all personnel become familiar with the school's layout (Covington, 2018; Farr, 2018).

Active shooter safety drills ensured that students and staff survived in the event of such an occurrence. The exercises evaluated best safety practices. The perception of crisis-preparedness (Kyle et al., 2017; Perkins, 2018) clarified that schools had realistic exercises that simulate real-life situations since a shooter maximized panic to inflict maximum injury and damage to the victim.

A systematic review of collaborative performance and preparedness with local law enforcement agencies and first responders ensured best practices of crisis response plans in the event of threatening situations (Perkins, 2018). However, Peterson and Densley (2019) pointed out the limitations of safety drills where the active shooter is a former student or staff member and aware of the crisis response. Students rehearsed lockout drills, on average, five to 10 times a year.

Cho et al. (2019) suggested that additional technological innovations could be more effective in preventing a mass shooting. In separate studies, they identified 12 categories of interventions being utilized to address school violence: entry control, identification technology, video surveillance technology, communication technology, school-site alarm and protection

systems, emergency alerts, metal detectors and X-ray machines, Anonymous "tip lines", tracking systems, maps of school terrain and bus routes, violence prediction technology, and social media monitoring.

Emergencies do not always allow people the opportunity to dial 911. Additionally, a school district in Georgia installed panic buttons in each primary and secondary public school, with similar installments in California and New Jersey schools (Scott, 2013). Many technological advancements, such as access control devices, were widely used, while others, such as prediction technology, had not yet been tested as a safety measure (Peterson & Densley, 2019).

Hevia (2018) explained that a school shooter's objective was to gain entry to the facility and kill innocent people. These attempts were committed during school hours; the invader could strike the school in various ways. Many school shootings could have been prevented or drastically reduced by controlling access to the school entrances and limiting the entry of individuals carrying weapons and ammunition into the school (Peterson & Densley, 2019). Monitoring and restricting individuals entering the school could discourage someone from trying to bring firearms and ammunition in schools. Cho et al. (2019) pointed out that in the event of a mass shooting in a school, this intervention might not be useful if the shooter was already inside the school.

The National Council for Behavioral Health (2019) also explained that schools that used extreme safety precautions included bulletproof construction doors, electronic door locks, metal detectors, and video-monitored emergency areas. If locked-down exercises had been previously announced, these drills could cause learners and employees to think that an active shooting is happening, which could cause psychological trauma to individuals in the school (Peterson &

Densley, 2019). While some safety exercises were warranted, those causing anxiety and trauma do more damage than provide safety benefits (Jagodzinski et al., 2018). There is a pattern indicating that the effects of mass shootings typically contributed to weak social connections and mental illnesses due to increased distrust (Metzl, & Macleish, 2015).

The National School Security Task Force had recommended a comprehensive review of gun violation cases (Cho et al., 2019). Metzl and Macleish, (2015) argued that the incidences of mass shootings and prospects of real-time protection were correlated with multiple factors. The factors that come into play included but not limited to the location of the shooter, number of people, human traffic, the possibility of nearby exists, and rational decision-making can hinder safety.

Training students

Drake and Yurvati (2018) acknowledged the legitimate and illegal usage of weapons. The second amendment allowed citizens the legal right to bear arms for self-defense. Using firearms, which resulted in an accident, or unintentional harm, elicits an illegal type. Additionally, this study showed that many younger age group members had constant access to weapons within their homes.

For example, Drake and Yurvati (2018) maintained some Texas students had direct access to firearms. Butt et al. (2019) reviewed several topics, including helping students identify circumstances that could escalate using a firearm or other weapons. The second priority is the coverage of the risky dangers to which carrying a gun could led. Other significant topics in the framework of safety training were ways to resolve conflicts peacefully, counter social pressure, and selecting a professional who could help in a difficult situation.

Obeng (2010) stressed that 13% of respondents strongly disagreed with this decision and

regarded firearm training as a skill taught elsewhere, not in public schools. Respondents doubted that children could get qualified training in educational institutions since there is no scheme for creating a useful lesson. In this regard, public opinion regarding the need to educate children on weapons safety disagreed. An alternative to carrying weapons to reduce violence in schools was the timely implementation of safety measures in schools.

Obeng also noted to prevent mass shootings in schools, a compulsory training program on the safety of using weapons in schools was needed. The study conducted showed participants supported of teaching gun safety, while 13% opposed it and 25% were undecided. Overall, 28. 4 % of respondents agreed that gun safety should be taught in grades pre-K (pre-kindergarten) through first grade. In addition, approximately 54 % thought that police or trained military people should teach this topic in schools, whereas 6. 9 % agreed that teachers should teach it. A more significant percentage of respondents (62%, $N = 102$) believed that weapon safety training should be implemented in schools.

Warnick and Kapa (2019) affirmed that access to weapons could only be provided to individuals and authorities were a part of the organized educational protection team. Schools could also use security cameras, metal detectors at the building entrance and exit, and apply other technologies to prevent the likelihood of bringing firearms into the building. Jonson et al., (2020) stated schools could create crisis response teams composed of trained personnel who could take responsibility in the face of a hazardous event, properly allocated and coordinated human resources, and provide quick intervention and elimination threats.

However, there were also supporters of educators carrying weapons in schools. Their opinion was based on the statistics of homicides in educational institutions and the impossibility of guaranteed control over students concealed carrying of weapons (Kolbe, 2020; Mancini et al.,

2020; Weiler et al., 2021). However, many security measures currently fail to prevent a homicidal mass shooter penetration. Therefore, many propose that the most effective defense lies in arming educators. Thus, in some states such as Utah, educators receive specialized training and instruction in the proper operation of firearms that they would subsequently be expected to carry covertly (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Uliano, 2019).

Strategies for Preventing Targeted Violence

Police Executive Research Forum (2019) met to review school districts following the mass shootings in Parkland, FL, Santa Fe, and Texas coming together to develop comprehensive strategies for preventing targeted violence. There was a belief that only Congress and state legislators could voice how gun violence is regulated in classrooms to stop shooting (Swanson et al., 2016). Police Executive Research Forum (2019) recommended actions to be taken by all to save people. If all weapon owners ensured their firearms were locked, the almost 24,000 firearms homicides every year could be limited, particularly among young people who frequently use firearms to hurt themselves or others at school. Although State legislatures launched 1,500 weapon laws in 2013, 109 of which became laws (Briggs, 2017).

Lott (2019) argued that school doors with security devices posed a hazard because single door access with a metal detector could led to cramped crowds, preventing easy evacuation in the case of an active shooter. A person could still open fire inside a school despite the presence of metal detectors. Instead, Lott (2019) suggested that attackers could be deterred if they knew educators had access to firearms. In addition, Lott compared educators or staff to people who carried firearms in grocery stores, movie theaters, or restaurants.

Kyle et al. (2017) reviewed a study conducted at Midwestern University on concealed weapons on campus. Faculty and staff supported non-weapon policies such as sharing

information; student findings indicated the opposite. Several students continually expressed the need for policies that could allow educators and staff to use concealed firearms and other weapons on campus (Kyle et al., 2017). It could be noted that not everyone on the school campus agreed with individuals carrying firearms on campus.

Lewis et al. (2016) examined the beliefs among study participants that firearms on college campuses could generate an atmosphere of anxiety and paranoia among students, educators, and staff upon the realization that an unstable instructor could potentially opt to resolve interpersonal conflicts with the authorized weapon. The undergraduate student participants reported viewing gun violence as a severe social problem in the US. In a survey of 419 student respondents of a 52-item questionnaire, Lewis et al. (2016) found that 54% of participants agreed that it should be prohibited for ordinary citizens to buy military-grade assault rifles. However, respondents also believed that instructors could protect themselves and their students using firearms conditionally, whereas 73% decided that safety precautions were appropriate for the K-12 schools, and 65% on the college campus. Yet, 56 percent of respondents thought the U. S. had not adequately addressed the gun control issue (Lewis et al., 2016).

Verrecchia and Hendrix (2017) conducted research showing that marginally fewer participants (46. 5 percent) of students would be comfortable with students and trained staff concealing firearms on campus, which they considered significantly higher than other studies analyzed. Beggan (2019) stated that the Texas Legislature elected in 2016 to allow licensed gun owners to bear firearms on four college campuses and allowed two more colleges to carry arms two years later. The most significant concern was highlighted: student, employee, and faculty members felt stressed. While an increased number of state legislators sought to enact legislation

encouraged the arming of school employees, there seemed to be a shortage of scientific research on the topic from the viewpoint of individuals directly involved in implementing the policies (Chrusciel et al., 2015).

After the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, pro-gun ideologues such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) yet again appealed for average citizens to empower themselves through the purchase of firearms (Cahn & Cahn, 2016; Culletto, 2019). In contrast, in the FBI, citizen interception of active shooters only occurred at a frequency of 1in 10 incidences (Giffords Law Center, 2018b). Moreover, many at the FBI (2018) contended that relaxing weapon legislation and encouraging the purchase of more firearms only exacerbated and increased the propensity of gun violence. Despite both arguments, Katsiyannis et al. (2018) wrote that the continued pace at which dynamic, active school shootings occurred, law enforcement officials and civilians must be prepared and trained to counteract.

The Gifford Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2018b) stated the weapons issue had become a contentious topic among armed advocates. Gifford Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2018) indicated gun advocates believed arming educators could protect students and educators. Critics pointed out the inherited peril awaiting students on campuses where firearms which were unlawfully or lawfully presented. Everytown for Gun Safety (2015) denounced that armed educator could not be expected to turn into a qualified law enforcement officer at a time of extreme difficulty and confusion. Chrusciel et al. (2015) argued that since the SROs were financed by the school district or the law enforcement agency, each school has developed an economic interest in the school districts and law enforcement agencies.

Many law enforcement officials and school leaders showed conflicting support towards the idea of arming educators within their community (Chrusciel et al., 2015; Rajan 2018; Rogers

et al, 2018; Winston, 2016). Figures showed fewer than half (46. 7%) of the law enforcement and approximately (40%) of the administrators agree that "An armed administrator could decrease the number of people killed by a mass school shooter" (Chrusciel et al., 2015, p. 27).

Everytown for Gun Safety (2015) stated that schools needed to validate SROs' qualifications and training to promote openness and accountability. Everytown for Gun Safety (2015) also expressed arming educators as dangerous. Students become vulnerable to unstable school staff who might resort to using the sanctioned weapon against the student. Additionally, within the K-12 educational institution, children could do little to stop an active intruder. Thus, SROs, law enforcement officers responsible for providing a level of security on school campuses, largely opposed the idea of arming educators (Rogers et al., 2018; Winston, 2016).

Firearms in Schools Supporters of policy that could allow educators to carry firearms argued that those particular school environments were generally safer (Lott, 2019; (Rajan, & Branas; Rogers et al., 2018; Winston, 2016). Lott (2012) detailed a survey conducted in 2012 by the group Police One, a private police organization comprised of 450,000 members. In contrast to local and state-funded police departments, the group reported that 77% of them favored educators and school employees, assisting them in carrying a weapon. The group claimed that officers patrolling alone could not single-handedly restrain a school shooter due to his/her vulnerable position leaving them open to attack, which endorsed the purpose of arming educators in schools (Lott, 2019; Tannenbaum, 2020).

A study conducted by Dahl et al. (2016) showed that 86% of officers believed fewer deaths would occur in multiple school attacks if lawfully armed citizens were intercepted. Also, many school districts consider the implications of authorizing educators to bear arms, while many other states had left the dynamics of carrying weapons to the discretion of individual

school administrators (Litvinov, 2019). For example, Lott (2018) reported that of educators in Utah carried concealed firearms and indicated. Additionally, Giffords Law Center (2018b) reports no evidence of a mass shooting inside a school where educators carry concealed firearms.

Farr, 2018 and Samuels, (2018) believed weaponizing educators could pose no security risks as long as proper training occurred. However, the concern regarding the increased level of accountability placed upon educators with respect to gun safety, defending against intruders while also providing educational curricula, is paramount (Cornell, 2020; Rajan & Branas, 2018). Every Town Research (2019) highlighted the apparent fears among parents and students toward the implications of educators and the new degree of risks posed in daily interpersonal interactions. Educators acting as the first or last line of defense as an organized strategy to combat an active shooter is unfounded empirical research and adds an exponential layer of accountability upon educators (DeVos et al. 2018; Farr, 2018; Samuels, 2018). Additionally, underscoring apparent challenges such as law enforcement officials could also assume the duty to distinguish between an intruder and an educator lawfully permitted to defend the school with a firearm (Education Week, 2018).

Arming educators presented unforeseen complications, including but not limited to deliberate or unintentional injury and death when utilizing authorized firearms (Rajan & Branas, 2018; Rogers et al., 2018). The prevailing argument that supplying educators with weapons could be a cost-effective alternative to or replacing law enforcement agencies belies that publicly funded, trained officers already served citizens of the school district within state and local governments (Burke, 2020; Rogers et al., 2018). Therefore, McLively, (2019) contended that armed educators could fail as a viable replacement for highly trained law enforcement officers to combat an active school shooter.

Farr, and Samuels (2018) asserted the contradictory expectation that highly educated civilians (educators) could be responsible for defending lives against a deranged intruder while also delivering educational content. The National Association of School Resource Officers had resisted calls to arm educators, citing the potential that students could easily access a school-authorized firearm, increasing the risk of injury and death (National Association of School Resource Officers, 2018). Counts et al. (2018) supported this notion, describing the easy access to weapons documented in the recent past, where former students involved in mass shootings gained access to their parents' firearms. Similarly, domestic abuse, acts of theft, deliberate or accidental shootings, misunderstandings, and simple disagreements increase the likelihood of misconduct regarding a school-authorized firearm (Ibrahim, 2019; Stroud, 2020).

 In the event of a "homicide-by-educator," some question if the school district assumed culpability toward the victim and family (Education Week Staff, 2018).

Additionally, in case of an emergency, the armed educator could complicate the overall response by law enforcement agencies due to communication errors and poor coordination. The lack of coordination could result in friendly fire between the police and armed educators, complicating the overall response to active shooter incidents (Andersen et al., 2021; Everytown for Gun Safety, 2019; Zhu et al., 2020).

Giffords Law Center (2018c) emphasized varying reactions across the countries on the essence of firearms in schools. Some states had readily accepted and passed the proposition, while others were hesitant to take and implement such measures (Dahl et al., 2016; Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Lott & Wang, 2020; Rogers et al., 2018). In 2017, 94 incidents of school gun violence occurred, while many lawmakers across states spend considerable time advocating for

more firearms in schools. The author insists that arming educators makes students less safe (Litvinov, 2019).

Florida was among the states that passed regulations allowing educators who undergo training to carry firearms (DeMitchell, & Rath, 2019; Moran, 2020). However, the Florida Education Association opposed the move, advocating for hiring more mental health staff for school students. Missouri enacted the HB 575 legislation permitting carrying a concealed gun (Aizenman, 2018; Giffords Law Center, 2018). The implication was that staff members, students, or visitors with a gun permit could walk around the school with a loaded firearm (Education Week, 2018; Flannery et al., 2020; Malcolm & Swearer, 2018).

The Montana legislature also adopted bills meant to ensure more weapons on school grounds. Oklahoma permitted educators to carry firearms upon completing the reserved officer or armed guard mandatory training (Litvinov, 2019). The state of Texas also allowed some school staffers to carry firearms. Like Florida, the Texas State Educators Association opposed the move, underscoring lawmakers' need to increase school funding and improve mental health services (Ayoride et al., 2015; Ciccotelli, 2020; Lott, 2019). Thus, the permissible use of firearms among educators within public educational institutions across the nation remained a real possibility.

Assessing Gun Control Despite tragedies like Sandy Hook Elementary, where dozens of first graders and educators lost their lives due to gun violence, legislation to control access to firearms often met with strong resistance among supporters of the U. S. Constitution, which protected ownership of firearms among legal citizens (Liu & Wiebe, 2019; Newman & Hartman, 2019; US Const. amend. II). However, a steady increase in school mass shootings over the past 30 years had garnered an emphasis on strengthening background checks so that the mentally ill,

ex-felons, and others do not gain easy access to automatic rifles (Kopel, 2015; Fisher et al., 2017; Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2017). Gun control legislation denoted possible legal measures that could restrict the possession and use of some firearms (Shepperd et al., 2018 Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2017; Zeoli & Paruk, 2020).

In the US, gun control presented a tense political debate between those who perceive it as vital to public health and safety and others who believed firearm policies infringe upon their inalienable rights as U.S. citizens (Hawkins, 2021). Proponents of the Second Amendment had a vested interest in exercising their legal right to gun ownership. Consequently, gun ownership and the use of firearms continued to be significant material elements of American culture (Yamane, 2017). Evidence shows America had the highest rate of homicides committed using firearms among all other developed nations globally (Kopel & Greenlee, 2018; Madfis, 2017; Follman, 2018; US Const. Amend. II; Whaley, 2020).

With regard to the institution of education, until recently, the presence of firearms was strictly prohibited from school grounds carrying steep ramifications of legal prosecution for those caught violating those laws (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2018; Luca et al., 2020). However, this research delved into the real and impending possibility of open or concealed carry of firearms among public school educators. Advocates of stricter gun regulation claimed restricting access to weapons could effectively mitigate violence and save lives (Fox & Fridel, 2018). However, Hartz (2018) stated that it could do the reverse by deterring peaceful, law-abiding people from defending themselves when threatened by violent offenders.

Mass shootings commanded national attention, sparked the debate about gun ownership and the need for stricter regulations (Luca et al., 2020). Such incidences stimulated immediate conversation on gun control. Still, they become pre-empted due to obligations held by each of

the two major political parties toward gun lobbyists, such as the NRA (Liu and Wiebe, 2019).

As such, no reasonable action beyond the usual condolences in case of a mass shooting ever

materializes (Dahl et al., 2016).

Proponents of gun control legislation supported concrete measures such as enacting

constitutional safeguards more likely to protect the American people, including reinstating a

federal ban, which expired in 2004 that prohibited the sale and purchase of assault rifles

(Giffords Law Center, 2018b; Luca et al., 2020). The previous gun attack incidences usually

sparked fear and anxiety among students (Fisher et al., 2017). Such high-profile occurrences

highlighted the extent of school-based violence that culminated in poor psychological and

academic outcomes (Luca et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the consensus to streamline gun laws to ensure a safer school experience

for students remained (Rueve & Welton, 2008). Arguments that stricter gun laws provided a

safer environment conducive to learning and more successful academic outcomes where children

would not fear the prospect of dying a violent and preventable death at school (Short, 2019;

Shepperd et al., 2018). A significant number of learners expressed fears about the likelihood of

mass shootings in a school, even though learning environments could be relatively safe. Every

Town Research (2019) affirmed that several gun reform activists had claimed that they

advocated for more vigorous background checks to detect weapons sales and step-up firearms

safety laws to prevent weapons-related crimes.

Politicians had much to say about gun restrictions. The lawmakers who insisted on

training educators to respond to school gun violence focus on the Second Amendment (Rivas,

2018). Historical indifference to Supreme Court decisions had provided pro-gun organizations,

such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), through its controlled in political contributions

and endorsements to advocate for laws that favored weapons ownership in public protection

(Musa, 2016; Rostron, 2018). The Dickey Amendment is an NRA-sponsored provision

introduced into the 1996 federal government's annual funding (Rostron, 2018). This bill

prohibited the Centers for Disease Care and Prevention from utilizing injury prevention and

control funding to support or encourage gun-control legislation (Rostron, 2018).

Hartz (2018) stated that attitudes toward gun control varied significantly across the

political divide, though they differed substantially along gender lines. Learners were likely to

feel safer in schools with proper gun control or contingency plans in cases of gun violence (Lott,

2019). Implementing specific policies adopted in many developing nations could come in handy

since gun crime in the US remained the largest in the developed world (Rivas, 2018; Yamane,

2017). The essence of comprehensive national legislation clarified the fundamental approach to

gun ownership, which stated it was essential since attitudes toward gun possession and control

were shaped by political affiliation (Parker et al., 2017).

When people were cued to reflect on the previous school shooting incidences, they were

motivated to think that arming school educators and staff is a viable course of action (Lott,

2019). Various aspects of gun control were better assessed through surveys (Stroebe et al., 2017;

Webster et al., 2018). However, the accuracy of such studies needed to be ascertained to provide

actionable answers for policy purposes by stressing the need for honest feedback from the

respondents (Fisher et al., 2017; Stroebe et al., 2017). In the US, gun awareness was promoted

every year through the various gun shows that showcase superior features of different firearms

and how they could be used to achieve gun owners' safety objectives (Iwama & McDevitt, 2021;

Webster et al., 2). Nevertheless, automatic rifles were used by rogue characters to inflict

maximum harm in the case of a mass shooting incidence, either in public or in a school setting (Nordberg, 2020; Short, 2019).

Although Americans disagreed with firearms in many ways, the vast majority of gun owners and non-gun owners were highly supportive of initiatives to reinforce our gun laws (Barry et al., 2018). Wolfson et al. (2017) acknowledged that many Americans, including most gun owners, agreed that licensed gun owners' restrictions were warranted when carrying weapons in public areas. These beliefs differed strongly with the emerging trend in state legislatures to broaden when, how, and who can carry a weapon in public places. Findings by Wolfson et al. (2017) noted that less than 1 in 3 U. S. adults approved carrying weapons at a specific location. Public support among gun owners was consistently greater than amongst non-gun owners. As a whole, support for carrying a weapon in public was lowest in schools (Wolfson et al., 2017).

Educators carrying firearms

Collie (2019) indicated that some school jurisdictions held mandatory training exercises. This allows educators and children of all ages to learn what they could do in the event of an active shooter. Abdalla et al. 2018 posits that implementing more safety measures failed to provide an effective policy. Moreover, additional safeguards often led to decreased students' safety (Stroebe et al., 2017).

Consequently, gun violence was a public health concern, and interventions were needed to address the problem (Elliott, 2015). Farr and Samuels (2018) stated, notable changes immediately emerged following the Santa Fe High School attack, high school; Texas Governor revamped the Marshal training standards. Farr and Samuels (2018) stated the approval of the 2013 Safety of Texas Children Act, authorizing the school board to appoint highly qualified

school marshals to respond to lethal violence committed within the confines of school buildings or campuses.

Critics strongly opposed the idea of weaponizing educators because of the increased level of accountability placed upon them. Proponents claimed that the program does not force educators to carry firearms against their will. Instead, educators volunteered as willing members of a school team. Abdalla et al. (2018) acknowledged that preventing school shootings should be the first line of defense. The concept of arming school educators and school administrators suggested addressing safety prevention (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016; Tanner et al., 2018; Torres, 2016; Vossekuil et al., 2016). Lewis et al. (2016) focused primarily on College Students Opinions on Gun Violence, polling 419 students who utilized a random sample survey from the Midwestern University concluded that educators, staff, and students tended to oppose carrying out the concept of carrying concealed weapons on campus.

State gun laws

Federal law governed the purchasing and possession of weapons in the United States. Under existing federal law, firearms could not be sold to individuals with documented severe mental illness, those accused of felonious offenses, abusers of illicit drugs, and non-citizens of the U. S. (Giffords Law Center, 2018; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018). Federal law sets a national baseline on individuals' eligibility for possession of firearms (Giffords Law Center, 2018). The federal law explained the acquisition or possession of firearms was generally prohibited if the person was convicted of crimes or was subjected to specific court orders related to domestic violence or severe mental illnesses (Adelmann, 2019; Fox & Fridel, 2018; Giffords Law Center, 2018).

The FBI's NICS background control system ensured that individuals with these restrictions could not pass a background check to attain a firearm (American Psychological Association, 2013). States could also pass legislation that reflected federal firearm regulations enabling state law enforcement, lawyers, and the judicial system to impose specific regulations instead of depending entirely on more restricted federal compliance power (Parker et al., 2020). People over the age of 21 apply for a legal gun permit via their local law enforcement agency to sell or purchase pistols or firearms. Simultaneously, rifles do not require a permit application and may be purchased by those 18 years or older (Giffords Law Center, 2018).

In forty-three states, acquiring weapons does not require a license or registration (Giffords Law Center, 2018). States govern their citizens and legislate gun regulations differently, particularly concerning educational institutions. Grossoehme, (2014) prohibits the open or covert carrying of any weapon (any type of gun**,** rifle, pistol, or other firearms**)** in schools and campuses.

Following the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA), no school could authorize educators or students to carry firearms (Giffords Law Center, 2018; Oltman & Surface, 2017). In particular, even the laws of states adjacent to each other can have significant differences. However, some state, laws permitted the possession of air firearms, air rifles, or stun firearms, and their transfer to the school grounds (Mancini et al., 2020; North Carolina General Assembly, 2011)

Arming educators

North Carolina laws provided a wide range of detail in the harboring and using weapons by staff and students while on school campuses. Current law prohibits an educator (or any other employee) from entering a building while possessing a firearm. Instead, they must be kept at

home or left it in a locked car (Armed Campuses, 2019; North Carolina Arms Laws, 2014). Gun laws in the border state of South Carolina mirror North Carolina very closely, but with a significant distinction: South Carolina legislation allowed for staff who gained permission from supervisory authorities or school administration to carry their registered and legal firearm on campus grounds (Armed Campuses, 2019).

Regulating the use and possession of firearms in educational institutions in Virginia implied more circumstantial freedom with respect to open and conceal carry among staff (Aizenman, 2018; Gifford Law Center, 2020). For example, people could not carry firearms in crowded places but concealed carry permissible in open areas of school campuses (Armed Campuses, 2019). At the same time, state institutions independently developed and controlled gun regulations within their limits (North Carolina Firearms Laws, 2014; Parker et al., 2017).

Also, Virginia's law provided the administrations of educational institutions with complete autonomy in determining rules for carrying and storing weapons (Gifford Law Center, 2020; Hutchins, 2021). For example, administrators could prohibit firearms from school grounds or allow limited restrictions. In this case, this regulation covered both students and educators. These rules applied to both private and public schools. In this regard, consideration of different states' gun laws showed that regulation differed based on the following: degree of autonomy of administrators, direct or indirect prohibitions, types of firearms, and the institution itself (Aizenman, 2018; Hutchins, 2021).

Many conflicting opinions led to the national debate about whether educators should carry firearms at school. Drake and Yurvati (2018) reported that only ten states have completed weapons permits in educational institutions. In turn, eighteen states imposed specific restrictions on such permits.

In most states, the researchers noted that a person must gain documented permission from a senior-ranking authority within the institution before carrying firearms near the territory of the school campus legally (Drake and Yurvati, 2018) Gifford Law Center, 2020; Hutchins, 2021). Otherwise, only those employed in the public security sector could be in possession of a firearm on or near campus. Grossoehme, (2014) addressed weapons such as stun firearms, pneumatic pistols, and rifles, daggers, shot firearms, metal brass knuckles, open razors, explosives, and any other kind of sharp objects (such as sharpeners or tools used for cooking) were not permitted to carry openly or covertly within the school grounds. Large firearms were unambiguously banned in schools (Aizenman, 2018; Kambam et al., 2020; Vargas et al., 2020).

However, some states permitted the presence and use of the aforementioned weapons in schools for educational and instructional purposes (Giffords Law Center, 2018; Vargas et al., 2020). The proposed legislation could have allowed educators in North Carolina to carry firearms in school and be given authority to make arrests in incidences where an intruder threatened the sanctity of members of the school community (North Carolina General Assembly, 2018; Vargas et al., 2020). Ultimately tabled in March of 2018, the bill included rewarding educators who followed the state directive to get essential firearm training as a condition of carrying a gun in the classroom (Giffords Law Center, 2018; North Carolina General Assembly, 2018).

Educators who completed the firearm training requirement could earn a 5% salary incentive. Structured under the elaborate School Security Act of 2019, the plan would have costed $9. 3 million. The expenses would have covered salary increases and training, creating an educator resource officer position (Giffords Law Center, 2018; Hui, 2019).

Previously, legislative efforts designed to put more firearms in schools had significantly failed. The mass shooting in Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School prompted governors and state lawmakers to took concerted measures to ensure lone shooters were neutralized (Litvinov, 2019. Lott, 2019). The incident sparked the need to implement stricter gun laws in North Carolina to ensure such actions do not injure or claim innocent students' and staffers' lives in the school setting.

However, Florida lawmakers passed a law that allowed school staff to carry concealed weapons once they received the necessary training (Kambam et al., 2020; Olive, 2019). The success of regulation in Florida prompted more collaborative efforts from law enforcement officials and legislators to address school safety (Litvinov, 2019; Lott, 2019). Once approved by local police agencies, the programs could be implemented across the county and state lines across the nation.

The National Education Association conducted a poll in 2018 among 1000 educators (Hui, 2019; Kambam et al., 2020; Vargas et al., 2020). The results showed that 82% of the surveyed educators did not support calls to carry a gun to school. 61% of the educators were gun owners and strongly opposed the notion of arming educators in school environments. North Carolina would allow the educator resource officers to carry firearms in either an open or concealed manner (Hui, 2019; North Carolina General Assembly, 2018). About two-thirds of the surveyed educators insisted that they would not feel safe if regulations required educators to carry firearms.

To ensure security in public schools, the bill responds to the biting shortage of school resource officers and the practical impossibility of putting more officers in every school (North Carolina General Assembly, 2018; Vargas et al., 2020). North Carolina educators opposed the

policy as they believed that the presence of firearms could likely endanger students and staff (Covington, 2018; Hui, 2019; North Carolina General Assembly, 2018). The North Carolina Association of Educators maintained that arming school educators signified imminent peril. The organization advocated for improvements in school structures and the implementation of other security measures (Hui, 2019; Vargas et al., 2020). Emphasis included adding educators with other support specialists, including psychologists, nurses, and counselors, to address students' psychological, social, and emotional health needs.

Perceptions, Attitudes, and Opinion

Gerald et al. (2016) intended to uncover the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of educators wanting to carry a gun in school. The findings revealed that proponents of the second amendment believed that educators who concealed firearms on campus could enhance general safety, encouraging college educators and students to defend themselves and others. Gun advocates insisted that the chance of being killed by an intruder would fall if educators actively defended themselves with a firearm (Mancini et al., 2020; Minshew, 2018; Moyer, 2017).

When reviewing the existing research, the vast majority of educators, faculty, and students opposed the use of weapons in educational settings (Education Week Staff, 2018; Gerald et al. 2016). Research conducted by the Urban Institute interviewed and surveyed college and university officials, students, and community groups who viewed Kansas laws towards firearms on campuses as primarily negative (Tatman, 2019; Townes, 2019; Reimal, 2019). Before and during the early days of enactment of the gun law, educators, and students, noticed paranoia and tension among campus groups (Mancini et al., 2020; Reimal et al., 2019).

Weapons in School Debate

Incidents of mass shootings in school settings were met with mixed reactions, with some suggesting urgent, drastic measures to tame the trend (Hui, 2019; Kambam et al., 2020; Short, 2019). Gun control problems in the United States of America were affected by several factors, including social and environmental factors.

In response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, Fox, and Fridel (2018) stated that six states publicly backed legislative reforms. The amendments allowed educators to carry weapons in school provided they are properly trained (James & McCallion, 2013). Everytown for Gun Safety (2015) argued the challenges faced when it comes to gun safety in school settings were met with resistance by gun lobbyists and powerful political forces ready to pursue individual interests.

Paolini (2015) proposed an ethical responsibility for honest conversations to culminate in a comprehensive solution to these urgent problems to produce consistent long-term results. In the debate, educators were concerned about students finding out which educator or worker had a firearm and getting to them. Although Lott (2018) argued, bringing a gun to school is no different from a person who conceals carry anywhere else, it is a regular occurrence in many parts of the country. In 2018, more than 17. 25 million Americans were allowed to bear a concealed weapon legally (Lott, 2018). About 8. 63 million of the adult population carried concealed weapons from California to New York (Jones & Stone, 2015).

There were differences of opinion among Americans owning weapons due to the need for protection and those like having a gun. The existing divide between the gun opponents and gun advocates stemmed from the failure to recognize the varied approaches necessary to actualize the

basic need for safety (Shepperd et al., 2018). As such, Americans who legally own firearms viewed potential restrictions designed to enhance security as a threat to their safety (Short, 2019).

Jones and Stone (2015) explained gun control is a complex and controversial issue among many Americans, with strong beliefs on both sides of the gun rights issue (Jones & Stone, 2015). "The Second Amendment" granted U. S. citizens the right to bear arms. Those who accepted this right believed it is absolute to carry firearms, and it is unnecessary to try to limit the possession, purchase, and carrying of weapons (Jones & Stone, 2015).

Shepperd et al. (2018) expressed that some Americans who do not own firearms believe that gun ownership ultimately creates danger irrespective of whether people carrying the weapons legally. The belief was the community was saturated with more firearms ultimately resulted in reduced safety. As such, concerns on safety ultimately underlie the varied differences noted, provided an intuitive argument that has framed the way policymakers and researchers perceived the aspect of gun ownership and the proactive measures designed to manage the mass shooting scenarios in the United States. The view of firearms as a defense and a safety threat had been a popular feature since the Columbine and Sandy Hook mass shootings (Shepperd et al., 2018). The perceptions varied since some people owned firearms for protection, and others own them for other reasons and not security (Goff, 2019; Wolfson et al., 2017).

A study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed how Americans viewed people who carried weapons in public (Winston, 2016). This study revealed that most people did not support allowing members, even those legally authorized to carry firearms in public places. Although liberals and no–gun owners agreed to limit weapons in public areas, a survey showed that 78% ($N = 2072$) of gun owners believed they should be able to bring firearms openly to public places (Wolfson et al., 2017).

Gun owners and non-owners were deeply divided on several measures for gun policy. Still, some limits were accepted, such as banning those with mental illness and those on federal watch lists from purchasing firearms (Parker et al., 2017). There were a variety of views between gun owners, driven mainly by party membership. Wolfson et al. (2017) stated gun sales were up during 2013, and US gun manufacturers could not keep pace with a sharp increase in demand.

Perceptions of stakeholders when educators carry

Key stakeholders include law enforcement, school boards, and school superintendents. Palumbo (2016) noted that the way society viewed school safety had dramatically changed. Each representative stakeholder had differing opinions on the practicality of arming educators in the school setting. Notably, some educator organizations, students, and families empathetically opposed the idea of arming educators, expressing concerns that it could heighten fear and increase harm (Milam et al., 2016).

The proposal to arm educators could likely militarize the school environment, thereby exacerbating pre-existing tensions or interpersonal relationships. For instance, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) noted that efforts to strengthen school safety could align with the objective of local district dynamics and emphasize collaborative plans by incorporating input from the various stakeholders. Rostron (2018) argued arming educators could likely intensify the racial disparities in educational attainment that some attributed to a barrier called the "school-to-prison pipeline" dynamic, harming the learners in both the short and long term (Rostron, 2018). Moreover, school stakeholders could feel uncomfortable having armed educators in the vicinity, particularly when an educator may negatively perceive students of color.

School stakeholders emphasized that arming educators could factor in the psychological and physical effects on the student population. The challenge is compounded by the emphasis made by the American Federation of Educators. Schools needed to be safe sanctuaries for all learners and should not be modified into armed fortresses (Ayoride et al., 2015). Nevertheless, some local school boards throughout the country believed that arming educators' positive consequences exceeded the perceived disadvantages (Schwabe, 2018).

Moreover, some schools were in rural districts that suffered from delayed police response and increased their likelihood of supporting arming educators as a first-time defense against an armed school intruder (Milam et al., 2016). Stakeholders opposed to arming educators pinpointed the considerable danger posed by firearms on compounds (Jones, 2018). Adults with firearms in schools could make mistakes in a crisis, leading to unintentional injuries (Short, 2019; Justice Center, 2014).

The decision to arm educators was met with mixed reactions. Notably, the Florida Charter Schools Alliance (2018) carried out a school safety survey covering the member schools. 88% of the respondents opposed arming educators or school personnel. They argued that strengthening security at the entrances could reduce gun violence in the school setting. Furthermore, stakeholders feared that arming educators revealed implicit or explicit racial bias and changing educator roles from the responsibility of knowledge dispensation to security provision (Rostron, 2018). Florida educators would be permitted to carry firearms on school grounds. Nevertheless, school boards and superintendents must approve such a program (Florida Charter Schools Alliance, 2018).

Initially, schools provided a safe learning environment for learners and their peers. The learning environment had been disrupted by random acts of violence, threatening security in the

school setting (Long & Walker, 2018). The National Association of School Resource Officers stressed that arming educators would pose risks to learners, fellow educators, and law enforcement officers as more firearms increased volatility and risks of injury. Palumbo (2016) stressed society had a pervasive fear of crime, implied that school violence usually intensified that fear. School shooting incidences, such as the Columbine massacre, had prompted a reassessment of the ideal way to address the violent occurrences.

Ayoride et al., (2015) sought to establish an international perspective of arming school educators in the northern Nigerian region, an area destabilized by the Boko Haram terrorist organization. The researchers established the relevance of armed school policy as instrumental in deterring violent school attacks. The idea was supported by students, parents, and school staff regardless of race or ethnicity since security was a collective concern (Defoster & Swalve, 2018).

Some stakeholders were cautious about the long-term effects of students who grew up seeing armed educators in the school setting and viewed such scenarios as routine. Nevertheless, coworkers in any workplace might be unfit to bear weapons (Dahl et al., 2016). Some educators might not be mentally fit to carry firearms. The situation was likely to complicate an active shooter situation since educators occasionally experienced challenging mental breaks (Ayoride et al., 2015).

Moreover, some school board members were worried that not all educators might be level-headedness to make a sound decision during a dangerous situation (Defoster & Swalve, 2018; Everytown for Gun Safety, 2019). For instance, an educator might panic in case of an armed intruder and shoot at the wrong time or direction. The situation might result in the death of student or other school personnel (Milam et al., 2016). Will (2020) stated the implicit biases against students of color might also come into play, justifying the view by some staffers that

educators might be irresponsible and justify shooting incidences since they were not methodically trained on security provision dynamics.

Perceptions of parents about educators carrying firearms

Parents were not consistent in thought and opinion when appraising armed educators' effectiveness in the school setting. Yokley (2018) highlighted the existing parental fear despite the Republicans' spirited attempts to raise taxes to arm educators after school shooting incidences. A national study sample comprised 459 parents showed mixed reactions as 32% expressed optimism that arming educators could made them feel safer sending their children to school. That was in stark contrast to 43% of the sample of 459 parents who expressed concerns and felt less secure. Schwabe (2018) noted that most parents advocated for gun control laws to ensure a potential shooter could not easily access a gun. The likelihood of a child accessing the educator's gun or the prospect of having a gun misused points to the likelihood of sudden bloodshed.

Some parents supported arming educators but stressed the essence of precautions, such as ensuring educators undergo a training program every semester to refresh their gun-handling skills. Despite the disagreements, parents agreed that the increase in school shootings must be addressed accordingly. Rostron (2018) conducted a study that showed that 73% ($N =1000$) of American parents with school-age children felt safer sending their children to schools with trained security guards instead of armed educators (Winston, 2016).

The issue was complicated by political influences as Republicans who supported a proposal to train and equip educators with firearms in the school setting. Few Democrats supported the intervention (Payton et al., 2017). Though racial issues were of concern among

parents of minority children, arming educators was met with backlash since schools were viewed as gun-free zones (Schwabe, 2018; Yokley, 2018).

Parents of minority children were concerned about the danger posed by armed educators to their children. Notably, many black and brown learners in the United States were taught by white female educators who might not be familiar with their culture (Russ et al., 2018; Schwabe, 2018). Some white educators had disregarded the significant impacts of racism on the schooling experience of such students.

Firearms in the school setting could be detrimental since they were likely to affect the psychological well-being of minority learners (Yokley, 2018). Generally, parents were concerned with their children's safety and long-term demand measured to address school shooting incidences. Jones (2018) explained that 35% of parents fear their children's safety at school, a 24% increase from 2017. Parents feared that their children could be unfairly targeted. Historical occurrences supported their concerns.

Townes (2019) described the harassment of Dorothy Counts (Scoggins) as the first Black student to integrate an all-white Henry Harding High School in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1957. After four days of unrelenting harassment by her white peers and their family members, who would shout, stare, and intimidate her before, during, and after school, her parents finally withdrew her from the institution (Townes, 2019). More recently, an increase in the deaths of unarmed black citizens such as George Floyd in St. Louis, Missouri, and Breanna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, at the hands of other tax-funded servants, police officers, reiterated their concerns, including the shooting incidences of unarmed black men by the police. Gallup poll surveyed and showed the intensity of their worries when sending their children to an institution where their security may be compromised (Guillory, 2020).

Most parents were worried that community violence cases were likely to extend to the school setting and endanger their children's safety. Parents reported that young Hispanic and black students were usually discriminated against by most educators, who negatively perceived them and expect the worst (Payton et al., 2017). As such, armed educators might jeopardize learners' safety in the entire institution (Schwabe, 2018). For example, a black or brown child scampering for safety might reach into their pocket to retrieve a cellphone, leading to a negative perception of a shooter, culminating in harm.

On average, Johnson et al., 2014 and Stroebe (2017) noted that Black citizens were more than six times as likely to be shot by the police than Whites, and findings showed that police shoot at least three times more frequently than Whites in bigger cities. Latinos (Hispanics) were twice as likely to be shot and killed by the police than whites and half as likely as Blacks. A Brenan (2019) stressed parents had sustained fears about their children's safety in school since the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School gunfire in Parkland. Their concerns were backed up by consistent Gallup poll data that seem to support their concerns.

Perceptions of students on educators carrying firearms

Despite the widespread perception that school settings were the safest places for learners during school hours, high profile shootings, such as Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland school incidences, disputed the view. Arming educators might send the wrong message to the students, irrespective of their race. Schwabe (2018) referred to several statistics showing that many gun incidences at home occurred from the misplacement of firearms later misused by the children. Students may grow up with a warped worldview of educators being armed. Furthermore, black children were severely impacted by actions to reduce school violence (Johnson et al., 2014; Russ et al., 2018; Stroebe, 2017).

Additional interventions should be explored to minimize the intensity and frequency of aggressive behaviors (Long & Walker, 2018). The likelihood of "the weapons effect" should be deliberated to ensure students and other school stakeholders do not engage in aggressive behavior. Perceptions about gun violence among urban youths hinder eliminating non-fatal shooting incidences (Milam et al., 2016). Under this assertion, the presence of a weapon was likely to trigger aggression, stressing the need for further deliberations when assessing the racial effects of armed educators on the student population (Yokley, 2018).

There were concerns about the likelihood of aggressive behavior towards learners when they make mistakes. As such, students might feel uncomfortable having an armed educator in their vicinity (Long & Walker, 2018; Russ et al., 2018). Complications could evolve if learners attempted to steal the gun from the educator or access the weapon should an educator happen to misplace it.

The challenges underscored the importance of limiting firearms to trained resource officers tasked with protecting students in the school setting (Florida Charter Schools Alliance, 2018). No other race or ethnic group of students were met with as much disparity. Persistent inequalities amongst students of color faced higher school suspension rates, less exposure to experienced educators, and a disadvantaged chance of access to meaningful coursework (Homer & Fisher, 2020; Yokley, 2018). Consequently, for students of color, firearms in a classroom could be viewed as deadly accompaniments (Long & Walker, 2018). Categorically, African Americans and other socioeconomically underprivileged students coped and learned in harsh environments, sometimes perceived as threats by authority figures entrusted to severe and protect them as educators (Russ et al., 2018; Schwabe, 2018).

The legislation to harm educators was viewed as dangerous since educator bias might

correlate with the mismatched demographics of disadvantaged minority students in the school setting. Black students could be viewed as a likely target practice by the gun-wielding educators (Long & Walker, 2018). The challenge extended to the racism problem in the country. Educator bias required the implementation of measures to address the hate and oppression ingrained in society.

Concerns around arming educators could culminate in disproportionately harsh disciplinary measures in the school setting against students of color (Yokley, 2018). The effects on educators of color could be equally significant, considering the prevalence of racial profiling among other state-funded government agencies such as law enforcement. See figure 3 below showing black teens least likely to say "Allow Teachers to Carry Gun Could Be Effective"

Figure 3

Black Teens Least Likely to Say "Allow Teachers to Carry Gun Could Be Effective"
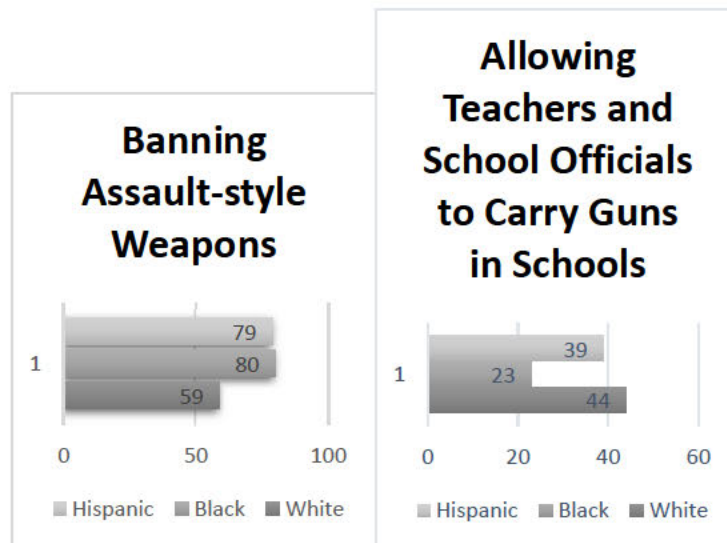
Percent of teens saying each of the following would be very or somewhat effective at preventing school shootings (Yokley, 2018)

How Teachers/Educators View Carrying Firearms

Educators were concerned about other educators carrying firearms in school settings. Educators might have implicit racial biases amongst themselves, stressing the dangers of having concealed weapons (Olive, 2019). There were no clear stipulations to ensure they were thoroughly trained on the safe use of firearms. Besides, there were challenges in case some educators take the weapon home as students might intercept them to take the weapon. Some educators had never fired a weapon before (Winston, 2016).

As such, counting on them to discharge their weapon roles accurately and safely might be far-fetched. The considerations were necessary as there is a marked difference between engaging in target practice in a highly controlled environment and discharging a weapon in a crisis (Dahl et al., 2016). The police might could have a hard time during emergencies at the shooting scene if the officers found armed educators, raising concerns about mistaken shooting.

The view by students and parents could change into the perception of state agents, leading to the loss of strong candidates unwilling to deal with weapons in their lifetime (Long & Walker, 2018). Besides, most of the shooting incidences in the school setting usually involved learners with a troubled history, as is the case with the Columbine, Parkland, and Newton high schools (Jewett et al., 2022; Olive, 2019; Regehr et al., 2017). The specific individuals needed tailor-made interventions, and arming educators is approaching a specific issue with an unrelated solution that might be unsustainable in the long term (Olive, 2019). As such, there was no convincing evidence that arming educators resulted in a safer school community.

Most educators disapprove of having educators carry concealed weapons in the class setting. The intervention could endanger the learning environment and adversely affect the learning process (Winston, 2016). Educators were adamant that they could be armed with

supplies and essential resources necessary to facilitate the learning process in the school setting. Educators walking around with weapons in a school setting were not likely to heighten the feeling of safety and comfort to the learners, especially the minority students (Dahl et al., 2016). Many educators believed that possession of weapons in school was likely to send the wrong message. Educators were not likely to establish the trust and love necessary for a nurturing school environment, likely to make the learners feel safe and valued in the school setting (Long & Walker, 2018). The challenge was common in many American schools since most educators were white. Figure 4 below summarized the respondents' attitudes about the impact of guns in school.

Figure 4

Elon Poll of North Carolina Teachers
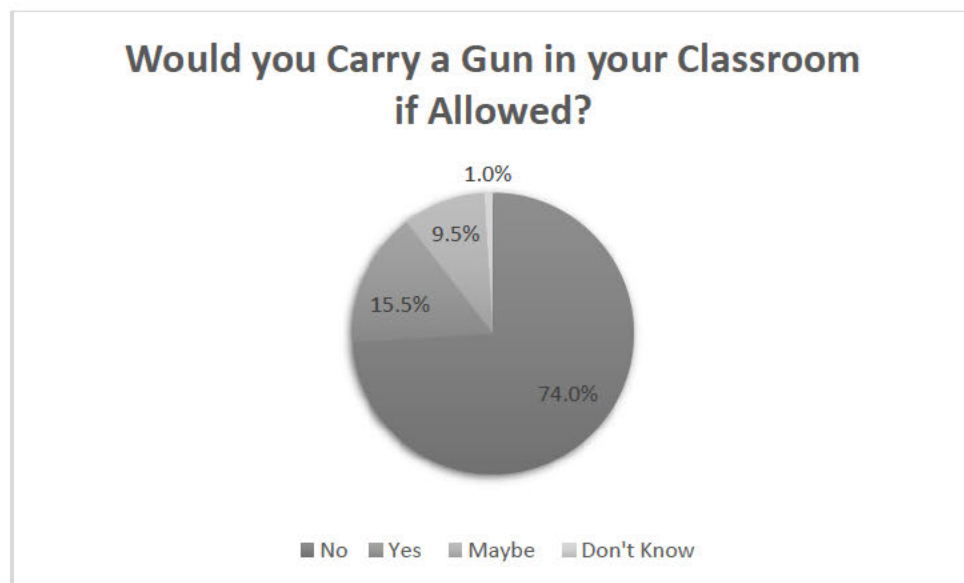
Data taken from Covington 2018.

The altered perception of educators might distort their positive image in society. The competence of an educator might not be judged by the individual's ability to kill another person.

The criteria might extend to an unconventional job description denoting the ability to kill someone perceived as a threat to the educator or the learners (Olive, 2019).

Educators negatively perceive the racial effects of educators carrying weapons since such a resolution might ultimately affect individual self-esteem. Notably, some educators might ask for guidance on using a gun, negatively harming their sense of self-esteem (Dahl et al., 2016). The approach was likely to endanger the lives of fellow educators, strangers, or students entering the building.

The prevalence of mass violence in schools had been on a steady increase since statistics had been gathered in the last 30-40 years. For the most recent part of history, traditions, women, and children represent the bulk of those present in a school setting. As such, the school had required and been relatively successful at providing a sense of safety for that typically vulnerable demographic sub-set. Tragically, however, the learning environment had been disrupted by random acts of violence, which threatens life, safety, peace of mind for all stakeholders, and the ability to maintain a safe, educational environment (Long & Walker, 2018).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Mass school shootings had increased and become problematic in the United States. A solution to ensure students' and educators' safety is needed in all schools. Schools in the United States need to be equipped with meaningful resistance to safeguard and prevent mass carnage (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014; Short, 2019).

Current strategies in schools were not working. School safety drills were ineffective; the exercises give the perpetrator the response needed to commit the violent act (Peterson & Densley, 2019). Federal and state policymakers urged school districts to prepare educators to use weapons in their classrooms in the event of a mass school shooting. Educators carrying

weapons in classrooms caused debates across the world, as many critics question if providing educators with arms made the schools safer (Collier, 2019; Kelly, 2017).

Based on the lack of empirical information, little research currently exists on the effectiveness of educators in school carrying weapons for added safety. There was growing data on school shootings, but at this time, relatively sparse information or data on studies centered around the pistol-packing educator: a phenomenological survey of educators already in a place desiring to carry a concealed weapon in school. There were varying opinions by educational stakeholders, educators, parents, and students. Notably, concerns among minority students as parents and students worry that educator bias against black and Latino students might result in disproportional punishment.

Most law enforcement stakeholders believed that educators could not carry concealed weapons in the school setting since they lacked the tactical knowledge to handle firearms in a crisis (Chrusciel et al., 2015). Besides, many educators were opposed to carrying firearms, a view held by some students and parents. Opponents of the intervention stressed that bringing more firearms into the school environment was not likely to end the gun violence problem (Baranauskas, 2020; Barry et al., 2018).

The view was disputed by the proponents of arming educators as they maintained that an armed educator was likely to neutralize an active shooter (Kelly, 2017). The gun violence crisis underscored the need to understand why and how these shootings repeatedly occurred in the school setting. The assessment covered the background context leading to this point, the perspective of educators and school personnel, underlying attitudes, possible interventions, and teachers' desires to carry concealed guns in the school environment. The study's triangulation method is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The chapter begun by outlining the rationale for the transcendental phenomenological design, followed by one central research topic and three additional questions. The purpose of this phenomenological study described the educators' experience of carrying a weapon in K-12 school and educators who desired to carry. This study consisted of a triangulation method utilizing a questionnaire, focus group interviews, and semi-structured interviews. The setting, the participating group, and the sampling procedures for the transcendental phenomenological was explained.

Currently there is very little research giving a voice to educators who desired to carry a weapon in K- 12 schools and shared their experiences. Empirically, this study expanded upon the currently limited research base regarding this dynamic. Triangulation of data collection and analysis procedures mainly used in a phenomenological design was explained, closing with a description of the methodology used to ensure the reliability of the findings and ethical considerations impacting the study results. Additionally, trustworthiness and ethical considerations closed this chapter.

Design

This chapter offered a comprehensive explanation of the design I used for this investigation. The description for this study contained information on the study topic, data collection methods, and how the data was analyzed. This chapter also included comprehensive information on the settings, as well as demographic data. This information was gathered to give the reader a better grasp of the educator's perspective to understand the desire of educators who

conceals carried in K-12 schools. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in this study to ensure their confidentiality.

Data was used to obtain a purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) described purposeful sampling as a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select information. The collection of data included surveys, focus groups and interviews. Data was collected to describe educators' experience of carrying concealed weapons in the school and the educators who desire (Patton, 2002; Rowley, 2012). Using the Google Meet Link, I conducted video face-to-face interviews with interested participants (Moustakas, 1994; Rowley, 2012). To ensure an engaging phase, I asked the participants a set of semi-structured interview questions (Moustakas, 1994).

This study focused on triangulation, a technique used to ensure that the participants' accounts were rich, robust, detailed, and well established (Flick, 2017). Denzin originally regarded triangulation as a validation method (Flick, 2017). Triangulation was a tool used by qualitative researchers to verify and create validity in their research by assessing a study question from multiple viewpoints (Abdalla et al., 2018; Renz et al., 2018).

Theory triangulation is the process of interpreting the same piece of data/information from several professional viewpoints. I intended to bring together educators with a range of various educational positions which fit the criteria. Utilizing theory triangulation could establish validity when each evaluators from various disciplines analyzed the data in the same manner and reached the same conclusions.

The method of triangulation was used for social media research. Triangulation derived from Medieval Latin (Fusch et al., 2018; Haydn, 2019). In social science, there were five forms of Triangulation: Data triangulation, methodological triangulation, theory triangulation,

investigator triangulation, and environmental triangulation (Chako, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; Renz et al., 2018; Renz et al., 2018).

To better understand the topic, triangulation required utilizing multiple source data in a study. Given that a single approach could not sufficiently shed light on a phenomenon, I interpreted the data from the respondents' interpretations using triangulation.

Surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews were performed and integrated into the triangulation-based study (Roulston & Choi, 2018). A range of approaches such as interviews, discussions, participant observations, action research, focus- group meeting, and personal text review can be used for phenomenologically based research (Fernandez & Crowell, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018). The data-gathering phase of this qualitative phenomenological research was firmly rooted in rigor using various forms of data to collect the methods to answer the research questions (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Using these three different data collections, I could obtain data from the participants as their stories were conveyed. Data collected from each instrument was based on each participant's own experiences yielding data from the participant's life experiences. By using three different data collections, I could obtain data from the participants as their stories were conveyed. Data collected from each instrument was based on the participant's own experiences yielding data from the participant's life experiences. My goal for using this model was to understand the research perspectives, including educators who conceal carry, through the lens of the lived experience

Research Questions

Central Question: What were the lived experiences of educators who desire and who were licensed to carry concealed weapons in school?

The three research questions guiding this study were:

Sub Question 1: How does your desire to conceal carry a handgun at school empower your ability to defend yourself and others? What is the most significant issue you have with educators carrying concealed weapons in the school?

Sub Question 2: What specific experience(s) influenced educators' desires to conceal carry, and why do you believe educators should be allowed to conceal carry in a K-12 school, and how does that impact your feelings of safety?

Sub Question 3: How do you describe your experiences in correlation with the Second Amendment Rights, and how has it driven your beliefs and desire to protect and defend yourself and the school?

Setting and Participants

I utilized Zoom links to conduct this study. I used social media platforms as a recruiting tool to seek participants. Because of COVID-19, this study required the use of innovative technology for the research process to conduct the qualitative research study since in-person qualitative data collection had been complicated by the limits of social distance and prioritizing participant and researcher safety (Sipes et al., 2020). As a key advantage of Zoom, the researcher acknowledged that it provided convenience, particularly in terms of access to geographically remote participants, cost-effectiveness, and time effectiveness (Archibald et al., 2019)

Using Zoom was thought to be time-efficient, given their remote location, busy work schedule, and the possibility of noisy or distracting working environments; this was viewed as a significant advantage. Zoom's key benefits include cost-effectiveness due to reduced travel expenses and the lack of up-front setup costs for basic plans. Studies found greater flexibility

when and where interviews c be conducted to use Zoom for data collection and cost savings from reduced or completely removed travel or venue. On K-12 school grounds, 25 states allowed faculty and staff to carry concealed weapons to various degrees (Martaindale & Schildkraut, 2022).

There were nine states Idaho, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming, that exempt school personnel from weapons prohibitions on K-12 school grounds. In any one of these jurisdictions, a school employee must first obtain permission from a school official, such as the school board or superintendent. School teachers in three states, Idaho, Kansas, and Wyoming, must each get a concealed carry permit. Missouri, Tennessee, Texas, and South Dakota were four other states that mandated school staff to attend training courses offered mainly by a local law enforcement department (Erwin, 2019).

California had the most school massacres from 1970 to 2019, with 158. From 1970 to 2019, Texas was the only state with more than 100 school massacres. , with a record of 133. There had been 90 school massacres in Florida, 67 of which these states allowed concealed carrying in some variation in their schools (Erwin, 2019). Educators played a pivotal role in improving their school environment by actively working to prevent physical violence, bullying, and emotional abuse, through building interactions with students and staff in their classroom and throughout the school. Addressing school safety, both at the K-12, was a weighty issue (Vossekuil et al., 2016).

Participants

I conducted purposeful sampling using a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling was a purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research (Ghaljaie et al., 2017). After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) had given its permission, any recruitment letters were

posted on the different social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. I utilized social media platforms to reach educators on the various sites to attain participants. Using this method, researchers begun with a limited number of initial contacts (seeds) who fulfilled the study's requirements and were invited to participate (Hipp et al., 2019). This sampling could be described as a recruiting strategy. The pool's aimed was mainly targeted at individuals willing to offer meaningful input to support research concerns of the study (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling was one sampling approach used in qualitative research, fundamental to the characteristics of networking and referral (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The size for phenomenological research recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2017) was five to 25 recruits. However, the recommendations allowed the researcher to estimate how many participants they were needed, although the desired number of participants relied on when saturation was achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; van Rijnsoever, 2017; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Data saturation happened when there was adequate information to reproduce the study, and the opportunity to collect further fresh information had been depleted, and when additional coding becomes inevitable (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nelson, 2017; Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019; van Rijnsoever, 2017).

My target participants were educators. Upon contacting the recruits, I reviewed the purpose of this study with the educators and answered questions they had regarding procedure or protocol. I reminded them that their participation was voluntary. All participants were informed they had the right to withdraw consent to participate at any time without reprisal.

Participants were not pressured to participate in this study. In the event, they felt they become uncomfortable in the study. They could remove themselves from the study, and all data

collected from them would not be analyzed or used in the study or any other future studies

(Ngozwana, 2018).

For ethical reasons, the research participants could come forward rather than be identified

by the initial educators. Researchers must be careful of "cold calling" (Kirchherr & Charles,

2018). Researchers had an ethical duty to respect participants by safeguarding their privacy and

minimizing the risks that could identify them (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Cold calling could

put someone in a highly uncomfortable or embarrassing situation regarding sensitive issues that

could be prevented.

For the researcher to avoid a breach of confidentiality or an invasion of privacy, the

researcher would, therefore, ask initial participants to distribute fliers, emails, detailed sheets,

etc. To ensure participants followed ethicality, they would not identify potential participants.

Before participating in the study, the researcher described the purpose of the study and provided

the potential participant with enough time to consider the information and make a decision

(Grant et al., 2019).

Data saturation was accomplished when no new ideas seemed to come from the

participants (Parker et al., 2018; van Rijnsoever, 2017). I intended to recruit between 10 to 20

participants ensuring I obtained thick data and the study had reached maximum information on

the phenomenon (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

With snowball sampling, educators might receive referrals from participants about other

potentially interested participants (Erwin et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2018; Griffith et al., 2016;

Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Marcus et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2020; Peoples, 2020). The

targeted population for the current study included working educators, male or female, educators,

who spoke English, and were permitted to conceal carry in a K-12 school or district. These educators needed to permit to carry a weapon on the premises.

Participants were recruited via social media, and various private educator's forum and through educators' social media groups. I utilized purposeful sampling via social media platforms to reach educators and conducted a snowball sampling technique to recruit participants. Participant criteria included educators who lived or worked in a state that allowed a firearm on K-12 campuses.

Educators were concealing carriers and desired to carry in a K-12 school. The educators were recruited through social media using private educators' forums and teachers' social media groups to conduct the snowball sampling and recruited participants (Griffith et al., 2016; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Marcus et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2020; Tankovska, 2021). As a result of my findings, Facebook and various social media platforms was ideal for reaching this hard-to-reach conceal carry educators' population who utilized social media. I could likely meet many educators who choose to conceal carry-on social media. Facebook and the various social media sites were an excellent forum for reaching out to educators who utilized the social media website.

The Researcher's Role

I attended a community college in 1983-1985, obtained an associate degree in Criminal Justice, and then transferred to San Jose State University in California. My desire to attain a forensic degree was overwhelming; I changed my degree of study. I was intrigued by understanding the law and criminology. I achieved an undergraduate degree in 1991 at Fayetteville State University in Sociology.

Several years later, I returned to school to become certified as a K-12 educator in special education as a behavioral educator, where I taught students with emotional disabilities. In 2009 I received a Master of Arts degree in Special Education from Ashford University. I transferred to Liberty University, where I obtained an Education Specialist degree in Special Education in 2011. I had been in the education field for 23 years.

My interest in this work arose from the recent pattern of mass school shootings. My concerns and fears as an educator that the same type of events could happen in my school. Realities reported on television, and social media have placed this topic at the forefront of my apprehension. Mass shootings were occurring in various communities within the United States; no community is safe.

The legislative Government had proposed that educators protect the school by carrying a concealed weapon, which had caused concern and interest among some educators. As a middle school educator and firearm owner, I, too, had nervousness about my safety. If this law were to pass, I wonder which educators would be responsible for concealing a weapon in the school.

For this study, I needed to be open-minded and minimize my prejudices and bias, as Yin (2011) suggested. Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that removing biases might allow the researcher to gain more added depth and information as long as it was nonbiased. Patton (2002) stated, "Any research strategy ultimately needed credibility to be useful. No credible research strategy advocated biased distortion of data to serve the researcher's vested interest and prejudices" (Patton, 2002, p. 51).

In my view, the school I worked had a plan on how schools would protect the students and staff if an assailant entered the school building. However, the practice drills included that educators cleared the hallways to secure students, locked the doors, turn off the light, and would

hide. The schools' plan was the only defense for educators currently. I was not against individuals who owned firearms but not educators concealing in the school.

I believed that schools should have law officers trained and licensed to carry weapons in schools to protect staff and students. Moustakas (1994) suggested that all researchers utilize bracketing to mitigate views so the researcher could experience and hear the participant, and their feelings would not be influenced. The researcher would follow the epoché process and employ bracketing to avoid subjectivity during data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002).

Procedures

After receiving IRB approval, I planned to use the social media platforms to target educators on the different teacher and educator sites in order to reach participants for this study (see Appendix A). Participants were requested to complete a screening survey prior to being included in the research (Appendix C). This screening tool confirmed that prospective participants fulfill the specified participation requirements. I gathered basic contact information and dates for focus groups and individual interviews.

A follow-up to all educators would be posted on each member site (see Appendix D), along with a recruiting letter and a link to the screening survey (see Appendix B). I would use the information gathered from the screening survey to identify the prospective applicants. After identifying candidates, individuals who fulfilled the participation and criteria and were interested in participating and contacted via email (Appendix D) and asked to complete the participant consent form (see Appendix E).

All the interviews were semi-structured. I recruit 10 participants for interview, 10 participants completed the questionnaire and two groups of five for the focus group. The scheduling of the digital face-to-face sessions was conducted after all participants were

identified, contacted via email, and consent forms received. All interviews were scheduled and face-to-face via Zoom Link. I answered any participant questions, collected the consent forms, and gave each participant a copy of the signed permission form.

During the study, respondents were requested to sign a consent form. Additionally, I would scan and electronically store all consent forms and other sensitive documents in a password-protected digital space. The researcher used all original documents to file in a locked filing cabinet at my school.

Once the consent form was completed, the participants were asked to complete a survey within a seven-day time frame. A focus group meeting was planned once possible availability dates for homogenous focus groups were established. Focus groups and interviews were conducted through Zoom Link was video recorded.

I recorded the focus group meeting using my personal computer for all interviews, and an iPad would serve as a backup recording device. All recordings would be kept in a safe location with password security. Unless otherwise specified, all individual interviews were conducted immediately after the focus group sessions. Individual interviews were conducted via a Zoom link and were audio recorded.

To perform member checking, I provided participants with transcriptions of their separate focus groups and individual interviews, which they might use for verification, clarification, and additional comments. Upon completion, participants were asked to provide verifications of their comments, which they evaluated and returned to researcher once they were finished. After all data collection procedures have been completed and audio recordings of focus groups and interviews had been transcribed, I compiled all obtained data for analysis.

Confirmations of comments from participants were examined and organized. The questionnaire data were converted to a spreadsheet. The comments from focus groups and interviews were compiled and organized (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; van Rijnsoever, 2017; Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Data Collection

This chapter offers a comprehensive explanation of the design I used for this investigation. The description contained information on the study topic, data collection methods, and how the data would be analyzed. This chapter also included comprehensive information on the settings, as well as demographic data. This information was gathered to give the reader a better grasp of the educator's perspective to understand the desire of educators conceals carrying in K-12 schools. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in this study to ensure their anonymity.

Data were obtained using purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) described purposeful sampling as a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select information. The collection of data included surveys, focus groups and semi structured interviews. Data was collected to describe educators' experience of carrying concealed weapons in the school (Patton, 2002). Using the Google Meet Link, I conducted interviews with interested educators (Moustakas, 1994). To ensure an engaging phase, I asked the participants a set of semi- structured interview questions (Moustakas, 1994).

This study focused on triangulation, a technique used to ensure that the participants' accounts were rich, robust, detailed, and well established (Flick, 2017). Denzin originally conceived triangulation as a validation method (Flick, 2017). Triangulation is a tool used by qualitative researchers to verify and create validity in their research by assessing a study question

from multiple viewpoints (Abdalla et al., 2018; Renz et al., 2018). The method of triangulation is used in social research today.

Triangulation derives from medieval Latin (Fusch et al., 2018; Haydn, 2019). The word triangulation drew its meaning from navigational and land surveying methods to locate a specific position in space by combining measurements obtained from two distinct locations. In social science, there were five forms of Triangulation: Data triangulation, methodological triangulation, theory triangulation, investigator triangulation, and environmental triangulation (Chako, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; Renz et al., 2018; Renz et al., 2018).

To better understand the topic, triangulation required utilizing multiple source data in a study. Given that a single approach would not sufficiently shed light on a phenomenon, I interpreted the data from the respondents' interpretations using triangulation. Using the technique of triangulation, I incorporated surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews (Roulston & Choi, 2018). A range of approaches to include interviews, discussions, participant observations, action research, focus-meeting, and personal text review, were used for phenomenologically based research (Fernandez & Crowell, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018).

The data-gathering phase of this qualitative phenomenological research was firmly rooted in rigor using various forms of data to collect the methods to answer the research questions (Lune & Berg, 2017). Using three different data collections, I obtained data from the participants as their stories were conveyed. Data collected from each instrument was based on each participant's own experiences yielding data from the participant's life experiences.

By using three different data collections, I obtained data from the participants as their stories were conveyed. Data collected from each instrument was based on the participant's own experiences yielding data from the participant's life experiences. My goal for using this model

was to understand the research perspectives, including educators who conceal carry, through the lens of the lived experience.

Survey/Questionnaire

Surveys and questionnaires were often used to describe and explore human behavior; therefore, they were frequently used in social and psychological research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ponto, 2015). Information had been obtained from individuals and groups through the use of survey research for decades. They can reflect a range of research aims, sampling and recruitment strategies, data collection instruments, and survey administration methods (Fernandez & Crowell, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018).

Survey and questionnaire research was one approach to conduct research so that the reader could critically evaluate the appropriateness of the conclusions from studies employing survey/questionnaire research (Ponto, 2015). Quantitative research techniques involved the use of surveys with numerically scored items. In contrast, qualitative research strategies might include open-ended questions or a combination of both methodologies, referred to as mixed methods (Ponto, 2015). For decades, survey research had collected data from people and organizations (Nestor & Schutt, 2018). The participants were given their interview questions once the researcher has received clearance to conduct the interviews.

Researchers kept track of questionnaire responses, response changes, and trends throughout the study. In the qualitative surveys, open-ended interview questions were utilized. The researcher begun collecting data by obtaining informed consent from the respondent. The researcher explained the study and how it determined how educators in a school system felt about being armed and then invited participants to fill out a questionnaire on their feelings about arming educators as a safety measure.

The researcher distributed a screener survey, a semi-structured questionnaire, interviews, and a schedule for the focus group discussions. A group email survey followed the interview. Using survey/questionnaire methodologies, approach to describe the participants' lived experiences. My objective in employing this methodology was to better understand the research viewpoints, including those of educators who conceal carry, through their lived experience lens.

The first survey was two-question screening questionnaire (see Appendix C: Participant Screening Survey). The purpose of the survey was to see if the participant met the study's requirements. The second poll provided a context for analyzing the study's findings. The survey assisted educators in better understanding their willingness to conceal carry on a K-12 school campus (see Appendix F: Survey/Questionnaire). Surveys offered data on how people approached things, attitudes, and knowledge using standardized questionnaires or interviews to gather data on individuals and their preferences, opinions, and actions in a systematic fashion.

A short reply with 10 questions survey was administered to the participants. Using open-ended questions in a qualitative study allowed the researcher to take a more holistic and complete look at the topics under examination. Respondents were given more alternatives and perspectives with open-ended questions, resulting in greater diversity in the data than with a closed survey. Finally, the researcher conducted focus groups using open-ended questions (see Appendix G). The following questions were asked in the survey/questionnaire:

1. How long have you been an educator? In what capacity were you associated with your School or District?

2. What experiences have you had to motivate you to conceal carry a weapon?

3. What types of firearm training does the school offer? Explain the expectation of educators who were allowed to conceal carry in the school after the training?

4. How does the school inform educators of the firearm training? Can you explain is the requirement to complete the training?

5. How do you feel about other educators in your school or district carrying a firearm in school? Describe your feelings of safety knowing your colleagues carry a firearm in school?

6. How many school shootings have your school or district been involved in?

7. Have you been in a school shooting? Would you mind sharing that experience? Describe what safety in schools means to you today.

8. To what extent do you feel educators were responsible for the safety in school?

9. Would you please describe an incident in which you or a coworker experienced or needed to draw your firearm?

10. How prepared do you feel?

11. In the event of a school shooting, how likely do you believe you would defend yourself or others?

Question 1 and 2 offers every participant an opportunity to share their relationship about their school or district, develop a relationship and further connect with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2016). Questions 3-5 were designed to understand better the participant's views of safety and their firearm training. Safety must be given priority for students to learn and improve for educators to educate their students effectively.

These concerns were closely related to exploring how critical our safety needs were at school (Kopel & Kopel, 2009). Question 6-10 were used to understand educators' perceptions regarding preparedness and weapons in school as a safety measure. These questions were designed to elicit responses from educators on how they feel about safeguarding students and staff from potential danger (Adame & Miller, 2015; Crano, 1983; Crano & Prislin, 1995).

Focus Group

Focus group discussions were a common qualitative method for gaining a thorough understanding of social problems. The approach sought to obtain data from a deliberately chosen group of individuals rather than a statistically representative survey from a wider

population (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Guest et al., 2017; Krueger, 2014; Nyumba et al., 2018). Focus groups were a method utilized by social and behavioral researchers to explain the opinions, motivations, behaviors, and thought processes that influence actions in response to specific societal objects or occurrences (Krueger, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Winke, 2017).

Upon completing the individual interviews, participants were invited to participate in the focus group (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Guest et al., 2017). A focus group size was ranged as small as four or five to a maximum of 12 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Focus group discussions were often used as a qualitative method to achieve an in-depth view of societal problems (Ochieng et al., 2018). Two focus groups were held to capture the topic discussion theme, consisting of five to eight participants. The groups were selected based on similar positions in common once the participants' sample is selected (Ochieng et al., 2018; Spritzer, 2017).

Numerous considerations must be made while preparing for a focus group interview (Adler, et al., 2019). When conducting a focus group, participants were selected. The study topic was dictated the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the number of participants per focus group was established, and the best method to contact these individuals was shared (Spitzer, 2017). Second, a plan for questioning and an interview guide was developed. The interviews' day, time, location, duration, and the total number of interviews was established (Adler et al., 2019; Farr, 2018).

Focus group members were chosen using either purposive or convenience sampling methods (Spitzer, 2017). The researcher used purposive sampling to identify individuals who meet the criteria for this study's objectives and then recruited them into the study. To participate, individuals had prior knowledge of the research subject, were within the proper age

range, profession or have psychological traits comparable to those in the study

participant (Barbour, 2017).

The first stage in participant selection was to verify that applicants satisfied stated

inclusion criteria (Farr, 2018). To ensure effective group dynamics and conversation, it was

necessary to arrange educators according to their profession rather than their acquaintance with

the other members of the focus group. However, educators (administrators, general educators,

special educators, etc.) had varying views and be more ready to voice their opinions if they were

acquainted with group members (Adler et al., 2019). A Zoom or Google link was used to

conduct the interview and to record and document. An outside firm was used to transcribe the

recording from the focus group sessions.

The focus group aimed to explore further educators' perceptions of carrying a weapon in

K-12 schools. (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Guest et al., 2017; Spitzer, 2017). Guest et al. (2017)

stated the focus group interview questions were deliberately selected to focus on a particular

interest topic in the research. The participants had several essential characteristics in common.

This group presented with less structured interviewing techniques (Ochieng et al., 2018). The

groups were structured to create as much homogeneity within each focus group (Crano, 1995;

Nyumba et al., 2018; Winke, 2017).

The interviewer used a standardized open-ended interview set of questions arranged and

organized for each focus group interviewed performed in the same order and posed the same

collection of questions. This helped to eliminate the interview responses' variation (Gawlik,

2018; Wolff et al., 2019). Researcher posed several general questions. All participants in the

group had a chance to respond. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that focus groups were

useful; the interviewees' interaction provided the best data where interviewees were cooperative

and communicative. The following questions were presented in the focus group:

1. How long have you been an educator?

2. How long have you carried a firearm in school? In what capacity were you associated with your school or district?

3. What types of training did the school offer? How much time was required to complete the training?

4. How did the school provide educators with firearm training? How often is training classes offered?

5. How has the training help to prepare you for an active shooter?

6. How do you feel about other educators carrying a firearm in school? Describe your feelings of safety knowing your colleagues carry a firearm in school?

7. Have you ever been in a school shooting? Please share that experience?

8. To what extent do you believe district educators were concerned about safety?

9. What is your perception of guns in school?

10. What were your perceptions of educators bringing a gun to school for safety if they were allowed?

11. What can educators do to ensure parents and the community feel more secure about school safety?

12. What is your perception concerning safety as a licensed educator gun owner when you hear a school mass shooting had occurred?

13. How has your school district prepared you as an educator to respond to an active shooter emergency? Please describe.

Question 1-2 offers every participant an opportunity to share their relationship about their

school or district and develop a relationship and further connect with the participants (Creswell

& Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2016). Questions 3-6 were designed to achieve a better

understanding of participants' views of safety. Safety must be given priority for students to learn

and improve and for educators to educate their students effectively. These concerns were closely

related to exploring how critical our safety needs were at school (Elbedour et al., 2022; Mitchell, Kopel & Kopel, 2009). Question 7-13 was used to understand educators' perceptions regarding preparedness and weapons in school as a safety measure. These questions sought to uncover the stake educators had in protecting the students and faculty and their ability to provide safety (Adame & Miller, 2015; Crano, 1983; Crano & Prislin, 199).

Interviews

Interviews represented a variety of data collection and analytic methods focused on participants' self-reports in response to questions posed by the researchers (Flick, 2017; Gitomer & Crouse, 2019; Renz et al., 2018). Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews provided insights into the actual views of participants by using open questioning (Patton, 2002). In a phenomenological analysis, the interview is by far the most common method of data collection (Bevan, 2014). The purpose of the interviews allowed the interviewer to probe deeply into the respondents' beliefs, attitudes, and inner experiences (Muschert, 2007). Creswell and Poth (2018) offer several suggestions when conducting an interview: there were steps involved in the interview process.

Exchanges in semi-structured interviews begun with standard questions for all participants but might provide more specific follow-ups and discussions between interviewer and participants (Roulston & Choi, 2018). I started by obtaining interview consent forms from each interviewee. The procedure for the interview followed a specific format. Zoom Link was the location of the interviews. Lastly, the researcher was prepared and had the questions ready and allowed the respondent time to elaborate. The questions were as followed:

1. Where did you grow up?
2. What was your first introduction to a firearm?

3. Please explain the role that firearms play in your family's life, particularly for those who conceal carry.

4. Please explain your background on what led you to carry a firearm.

5. Please describe what experiences you have had with a firearm?

6. Please describe what prompted you to enroll in a firearms training course?

7. Please explain why you became an educator and your intentions on making it a career.

8. What roles do you hold as an educator? Please describe your responsibilities.

9. What do you believe is your responsibility in keeping students and staff safe?

10. What level of training should an educator receive if allowed to conceal a firearm as a safety measure in school?

11. What were your views on educators carrying a concealed firearm, and will/or will it not make the school safer?

12. How do you describe your sense of safety in the school setting without a firearm?

13. How do you believe your sense of safety in the school setting would be if you were allowed to carry a firearm?

14. What is your most significant concern of educators bringing a firearm to school?

15. What are your personal views on who guns protect?

16. What is your personal view on the Second Amendment, which protects the right to possess firearms?

17. Please expand on your own belief that carrying a firearm may give individuals the illusion of authority.

18. Please elaborate on your thought on educators carrying firearms at school in terms of safety.

Data Analysis

The data analysis's primary objective for this study was to identify the common themes that would come into view from the interviews, focus groups, and semi structured interview questions. The data analysis was collected using a transcendental phenomenological method outlined by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas (1994) techniques for transcendental phenomenology

data analysis were: epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings. This data analysis helped to analyze commonalities and meanings of statements shared by the participants experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I merged the structural qualities and formed them into horizontalization, where I combined and cluster them into themes.

When all data and procedures had been obtained, I created protocols to structure the data once it has been obtained in order to conduct an effective analysis. I utilized coding to organize and evaluate the data that I gathered throughout the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I utilized thematic code to discover themes arising from inductive data analyzes.

The coding procedure was divided into two stages. First, I worked to develop the first code. The initial stage began with the systematic identification of similar themes and ideas that have been discussed throughout the interview (Adu, 2019). In the second step, I used more targeted codes to create themes and concepts based on the data analyzed during the initial coding phase. Data from interviews and surveys were processed, classified, analyzed, synthesized, and coded for trends (Adu, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The main aim of the data analysis in this research was to elicit common themes from the interviews, focus groups, and journal recordings. The data was analyzed in accordance with Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach (1994). Moustakas (1994) developed four methods for analyzing data from transcendental phenomenology: epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings. This data analysis assisted in identifying similarities and significance within the comments made by the participants about their personal experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

In the next step, I integrated the structural features and shape them into horizontalization, which I combined and cluster them into themes. As part of the second stage, I utilized more

focused codes to develop themes and ideas identified during the first coding process.

Organizing, sorting, and synthesizing data from interviews and questionnaires were designed to

look for other patterns in the data (Adu, 2019; Richards, 2021).

To code the transcripts, I utilized a color-coded method. Every interview

topic was color-coded and color-coded in specific ways, based on participants' perceptions,

ideas, and suggestions. I used a color-coded method for grouping patterns, themes, and ideas to

identify patterns, themes, and concepts that existed in all sources of data and those discovered

from the start of the study.

To explore different topics, I revisited old and new research themes several times and

look for recurrent ideas or concepts while ensuring I answered each research question.

Additional data from the interviews was also captured via field notes and journal notes, and then

a code was created for use throughout the analysis phase. To evaluate the data obtained from the

survey questionnaire, I used comparable techniques.

I reviewed the answers to get a better understanding of the areas of concern. This

investigation discovered correlations between the results and the interview questions. Then, I

examined the survey to see if any themes reoccurred. Themes were represented as narratives and

tables. I assigned the respondents a number. This helped me to identify each participant

throughout the research. During the focus groups, participants took note of, and spoke about the

common threads that emerged from the interviews and materials.

Each participant was given a convenient time to join the online focus group during the

planned focus group sessions. An hour was set aside for the roundtable discussion. Focus

groups may be used to confirm and hone themes discovered from interview data collected at the

same time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In chapter four, we analyze these results.

An electronic copy of each participant's transcript was produced, accompanied by a spreadsheet containing all interview questions and answers. The spreadsheet used to compare responses and detect developing patterns. An inductive and interpretive method were utilized to examine educators who desire to conceal carry a firearm. Theories related to educators who carry firearms in school were critical to understanding K-12 education.

Bracketing

Moustakas (1994) indicated that a disciplined transcendental phenomenologist must begin the data process by systematically preventing bias toward the phenomenon under investigation. As the investigator for this study, I committed and made every effort to remain completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing each educator described their experience of choosing to carry a weapon. Bracketing out my experiences allowed me to listen, observe, and interact with the data before reaching reflectiveness (Moustakas, 1994).

In an attempt to explain the phenomenon clearly and unambiguously, following Moustakas (1994) outlined the necessity to be open and accepting of new ideas, viewpoints, and perceptions of persons entering my consciousness (Giorgi, 2020; Sutton & Austin, 2015). In order to engage in the epoché process, I begun by describing my current role and sharing my experiences working as a special education behavior resource educator and my experiences and reasoning for taking the concealed license course. I shared personal experiences and efforts and resisted inserting my perception and perspective, maintaining the study's trustworthiness. Bracketing my experiences allowed me to listen, observe, and interact with the data before reflecting (Moustakas, 1994).

Horizontalization

The researcher used horizontalization to ensure each statement has equal value (Giorgi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015). I used Horizontalization, which called on the researcher to use transcribed interviews, focus groups, and documents of equal importance to every statement connected to the research topic (Giorgi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Horizontalization was a step in the phenomenological reduction phase in which the researcher assigns equivalent weight to all of the participants' comments. The researcher would remove both repeated sentences and those that do not apply to the research questions.

The interviews were transcribed word for word by an independent organization. I utilized member checking to verify the data by having the participants look over all transcripts from their interviews. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, investigates the trustworthiness of findings.

The participants were given the outcome to assess for correctness and relevance with their own experiences. Member checking was often suggested as one of the validation strategies (Birt et al., 2016). After obtaining them from the company, I checked the accuracy of the transcripts. I reviewed each of the participants' interviews, looking for significant statements from the participants. Moustakas (1994) indicated that all original statements were of equivalent value.

The Horizontalization process required the researcher to read reread the interviews that were carried out. I coded interviews through several readings, emphasizing significant statements (Giorgi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015). I organized statements based on similar comments, feelings, etc., used by participants.

All redundant statements were disregarded. Any comments that included pessimistic

perceptions or self-doubt were be excluded. The objective was to find statements describing the

phenomenon better (Giorgi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation was a process that allowed me to review the data and determine

possible meanings in innovative and creative ways (Moustakas, 1994; (Giorgi, 2020; Sutton &

Austin, 2015). This next step involved the researcher examining the data from multiple

perspectives with various lenses to elevate the essential concepts. In phenomenological research,

the objective of using imaginative variations was developed to clarify the meanings of the

research experience. It required an investigator to look at the phenomenon from multiple

viewpoints by imaginatively modifying different aspects of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2020;

Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Every possible insight could surface through the usage of the imagination. This process

helped researchers to describe the experience presented as structural essences. This allowed me

to arrive at a textural-structural synthesis of the phenomenon and its essences (Giorgi, 2020;

Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Synthesis of Meaning

To ensure I had established the phenomenon's essential essence for the final phase, I

obtained a professional transcription company to transcribe the interviews conducted, focus

groups, and semi structured interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Evans & Lewis, 2018).

Since synthesis usually goes together with the analysis, breaking down the concepts and

ideas into their essential parts or points (analysis) to draw valuable conclusions or decide about

the topic or problem (synthesis). I looked for commonalities in response to prompts and

questions to synthesize the meanings and essences by combining textual and structural experiences to create a principle essence of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Additionally, I strived to identify commonalities in the answers to prompts and questions in order to synthesize the findings, interpretations, and essences, integrating textual and structural interactions to render the central essence of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015, 2020).

The textual descriptions of the data enhanced the descriptive representation of educators' experiences leading to understanding their reasoning to carry a weapon. I would inspect all the documents for textual descriptions that focused primarily on participants' relevant comments that completely describe the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The textural descriptions aimed to explain the phenomenon, allowing readers to understand the phenomenon's complete detail, and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). These descriptions were analyzed from a variety of perspectives (imaginative variation), which ultimately contributed to an interpretation of the structure (the how).

This means that with each site, I explored trends inside the transcripts (textual) and the why (structural). A textural-structural description that arises signifying the meaning and essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). A description was created by repeating the above measures once the structural description is generated for each participant by repeating the above process. The descriptions were then incorporated into a more detailed explanation of the group's overall experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative analysis, trustworthiness discusses the significance of the meaning of the various facets of analysis trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, reliability, conformability, and

transferability) and the specific approaches utilized in this study to accomplish each dimension of the trustworthiness framework (Cope, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is the most common criterion for assessing qualitative research. Amankwaa (2016) clarified that the trustworthiness or rigor of research is focused on the premise that this absence of qualitative research contributes to a weak, unreliable, and invalidity view.

As part of the organization process, a description of how concepts or categories were generated was provided to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the study (Elo et al., 2014). However, there were no existing guidelines regarding how trustworthiness could be verified whether two or more researchers performed an inductive information review. The recommendation is that one researcher would be accountable for the study, and the other would closely track the completed review and categorization process (Elo et al., 2014).

Credibility

Credibility ensured there was confidence in the truth of the findings. Credibility is recognized as the most vital method to confirm credibility. Credibility ensured that correct methods were used to endorse or contradict research findings or conclusions correctly. I used these steps (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2016). Credibility techniques consisted of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member chec**k** (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). These methods helped to establish credibility in qualitative research; the techniques included prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member-checking (Amankwaa, 2016).

The ability to be trusted was a critical component of credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on Lincoln and Guba (1985) credibility were created when actions had been undertaken, which increases the likelihood that credible results and interpretations were generated. Activities

such as triangulation and member checking fell under this category (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To

guarantee the triangulation of data, I gathered data from three different sources.

After all of the data has been gathered and transcribed, I did a member check by asking

the participants to verify the transcribed data to ensure it has been correctly recorded. Based

on Lincoln and Guba (1985), this task provided the opportunity to check if the reported data had

been correctly stated. The colleagues from my organization who held a doctorate in education

assisted in the debriefing. I used peer debriefing, which held the researcher honest and was

imperative to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

An auditor was brought in to check the accuracy of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An

auditor is necessary because they establish credibility. The auditor could vouch for the study's

reliability and objectivity. I obtained the services of an external auditor.

I hired an independent auditor from my organization who is not associated with the

research. As the last step, reflexivity was included to guarantee the awareness of my prejudices

and values, bringing them to the forefront and bracketing them using journaling (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). "Triangulation incorporated numerous sources and the gathering of confirming

information from various sources to spotlight on a subject or viewpoint" (Creswell & Poth,

2018).

Three independent data collection techniques benefited in triangulating the data, which

increased the study's reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Triangulation was used to provide

a detailed textual description of the essence of the phenomena studied utilizing all three forms of

data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). With the maximum sample variation

feasible, the wealth of descriptive information provided increased transferability (Creswell &

Creswell, 2017). Triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and reflexivity were used to build credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability and Confirmability

In quantitative research, dependability is a concept similar to reliability (Patton, 2002). Amankwaa (2016) stated that credibility ensures the research is truthful. It refers to guarantee a rational, traceable, and well-documented procedure or research project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When conducting qualitative research, the researcher should be confident in the findings. During the report, I included details to ensure that the data I gathered is appropriately collected and provide an audit trail. An audit trail enabled others to track the relevant data and decide if something has been extracted from the background (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I maintained an audit to document and validate the study's results.

To support the results and provide direct quotations from participant interviews. Comprehensive, trustworthy research necessitated the development of a reliable and clear explanation to maintain dependability. An audit trail is generated to ensure that the data were correct and obtained at any pivotal time. The researcher's position ensured that any potential bias was made extremely clear, ensuring that the results were not influenced by prejudice but rather by the study and data. Participating in reflective journaling, employing digitally recorded interviews, and conducting member checks improved the research's dependability.

Confirmability assured that the data comes from the participants and not the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation and maintained a reflective diary were two methods that help confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflective journaling provided an unbiased description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail monitored the data collection and analyzing process. An external auditor reviewed the data to see whether the results, interpretations and

conclusions were justified (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I kept notes journaling regarding the feedback from the external auditor. This assisted in the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

My duty as a researcher was to have a thick description of the participants and the research method, allowing the reader to determine if the results were transferable to their context, known as the transferability judgment (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I assumed that the readers could judge transferability for transferability since I was not aware what settings they used to transfer the context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). By detailing the phenomenon in significant depth, I could assess how far the findings would reach into different environments, circumstances, describing individuals' attitudes, behaviors when recorded, and the emotions between the participants and researchers. Once the phenomenon was detailed, the evaluation process could evaluate transferability to other settings (Amankwaa, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Compared to the quantitative study, generalizability (or external validity) was shown by demonstrating that the results were obtained from a somewhat reflective sample of the population of which generalization was intended (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers intended to minimize generalization as they question whether generalizations can be produced regarding human behavior (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As part of the study, I provided detailed descriptions of the inquiry's context and detailed portrayals of the participants. I provided extensive verbal descriptions of the experience to allow the reader to draw parallels between the experience and similar situations in other contexts. These situations

could be necessary if there is a sufficient amount of rich, thick description accessible to ensure a reasonable determination on the degree of transferability (Lincoln & Guba,1985).

Ethical Considerations

While conducting research using humans, ethics were critical in all research involving human subjects. I ensured that any ethical concerns were addressed accordingly. My first step was obtaining IRB approval from Liberty University and have participants sign an informed consent form. Signing ensured that the participants were mindful of the research's intent while also informing them how to withdraw from the study if they decide to do so in the future. The handling of participants is the next point to consider.

To avoid unethical conduct, I had not misled any of the participants involved in the research study, and all the respondents was handled with respect and dignity. Participants' identities were kept confidential. To secure the identities of each participant, they were granted a pseudonym. In addition, before participating in the interview, all participants were asked to complete a consent form approved by the IRB. Any captured electronic data was secured on a password-protected hard drive, and any physical data is stored in a locked office.

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Summary

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This study utilized a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study to describe the lived experience of educators who desire to carry a concealed weapon in the schools (Moustakas, 1994). The participants were selected using snowball sampling due to the sensitive issues of the topic. All participants were giving a pseudonym name to ensure confidentiality for this study. All interviews were completed virtually setting. Maintaining data collection accuracy and integrity, respondents had the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews and finalize their interpretations to create any changes or clarifications. This chapter offered an introduction to the

problem, along with the purpose of the study. Research questions and a brief description of the

research plan provided insight, along with data on the significance of the study. The next chapter

will focus on the findings used in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The fourth chapter features a detailed description of participants who took part in the research as well as the dialogue that emerged from data collection methods. A phenomenon was synthesized using textual and structural descriptions. This transcendental phenomenology aimed to understand the lived experiences of educators who desired and were authorized to carry a concealed firearm in K-12 schools. This chapter presents the study's results by profiling the ten participating educators. In addition, this chapter revealed the results of the participant interviews and questionnaires. This section discussed emerging themes regarding the study's central research topics.

Participants

The method of recruiting participants was carried out via social media platforms. A survey was used to identify and recruit 10 participants for this study. Three administrators, two males, one retired female, and seven female teachers participated in this study. The participants all lived in various regions in the United States, from South Central Region, South-Western Rocky Mount Region, Midwest Central Region, Midwestern Region, and South-Eastern Region. According to Drake and Yurvati (2018), only nine states permit educators to conceal carry in K-12 schools. The experiences of these educators varied from two years to 38 years. The table below lists the participants positions.

Positions of Participants

Table 1

Position of Participants

Participant	Introduction to a firearm	Years of Experience	Region
Anna	Toddler	12	Southeastern
Brooke	Young Child	6	Western Region
Carol	Toddler	4	South Central
Donald	Toddler	28	South Central
Elizabeth	Young Teenager	16	South Central
Franklin	Teen	12	South Central
Gina	Young child	12	Southwestern Rocky Mt
Helen	Young child	38	South Central
Irene	Adult	8	South Central
Jenna	Adult	10	Rocky Mountain

Table illustrating positions of participants with names, age groups of introductions to firearms, years of experience, and region.

A pseudonym was assigned to each participant in order to safeguard their identities. Eight of the ten educators were seasoned professionals who had worked in the education field for more than seven years. Only two of the eight participants were men who worked as educators. In this study, two educators and one administrator were not licensed or carried a firearm in school. Two educators had planned to take the training so they could conceal carry, and the administrator was now retired and undecided if she would take the training. Participants Donald, Helen, and Frank all agreed that arming educators has aided in the solution of safety concerns at their school. Each educator stated that there had not been incidents of weapons confiscated from students or school shootings in their schools.

Anna

Anna had been an educator for 12 years. She worked in the Southeastern region of the United States at an elementary school. Anna was introduced to firearms at very early in life

before she could remember. Her family used firearms for hunting and sporting. She was taught

using a .22 rifle; then, up through the ranks, she used a 22 pistol, low hunting rifles, and

advanced to high-powered hunting rifles and shotguns. Anna stated,

> Having a firearm was cultural, where I grew up and where I have always lived. If you've
>
> never shot a firearm or if you aren't confident with firearms, it's like never having been
>
> in a car or not knowing how to spread peanut butter. I'm a deadeye and proud of it!
>
> Better shot than my husband and sister (in the military). If there were a school shooting,
>
> I would defend myself and my students. I have a calm and secure sense inside me, and I
>
> was not afraid. The Second Amendment, whose purpose was to defend the right to keep
>
> and bear weapons, are something that must be always acknowledged and handled with
>
> the utmost seriousness.

Brooke

Brooke had been an educator for six years and worked in the west-central region of the

United States at an elementary school. She was introduced to firearms as a child when her

father, and other family members, would go hunting. She was taught safety, and firearms were

always locked up. Brooke emphasized that she did not carry in school because they had a police

department close to her very small school, and she felt safe. Brooke elaborated,

> I believed my job duties had expanded as the world we live in has changed. My job
>
> would never just be a TEACHER; the climate of the profession and ever-changing home
>
> life bears more responsibility on me than ever. I am in a unique position in that my child
>
> was in my classroom. I literally would protect these children like they were my own
>
> because one student was. Being armed would be a last resort, but I would use my

weapon if our lives depended on it. Should it be this way, NO? But this how our world has become, and I would protect all the children.

Carol

Carol worked in the South-Central region of the United States at an elementary school. She had been an elementary school educator for six years. She was introduced to firearms when she began hunting with her dad at four. She explained her position and her responsibility was to do all in her power to safeguard the safety of our children and staff. Carol believed that educators carrying a concealed firearm would make the school safer. "We were guaranteed to be a victim if there was no firearm. Guns protect anyone using them correctly, and I was glad they were in my school. I felt safer having guns in school."

Donald

Donald had worked in the South-Central region of the United States and an administrator. At the time of the data collection, Donald was in his 28th-year educator for 28 years. He shared that he was from three generations of educators. Donald grew up with firearms in the home. He began operating firearms at an early age. His family enjoyed owning and collecting different guns for different reasons (hunting, recreation, and defense). Donald serves as an administrator who was selected to serve as the district's school firearm leader because the school had expectations, which the law mandated. Therefore, he developed a school firearm program to allow educators to conceal carry. Donald stated,

> Because we carry in our school district, our sense of safety was not an issue because we carry. We were safer, guns can be an equalizer for a potential or otherwise victim. I really did not know that a gun protected anyone, but it can be a tool for good and, unfortunately, bad.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth worked in the South-Central region of the United States. She was a seasoned educator of 16 years and was introduced to firearms at a young age by her father. Her family loved to hunt and shoot at targets. Her family owned many firearms in the home. Elizabeth stated,

> I hadn't concealed-carried in years. As a woman and educator, I needed protection. I wanted to be ready to protect myself, my family, and my students if needed. I liked target practice, training, and carrying my guns. Having a concealed carry license made me feel more comfortable at school. Nothing shouts "I won't be your victim" to a psychopath. A gun could help protect me, my colleagues, and my students.

Frank

Currently, Frank serves as an administrator/coach in the South-Central United States. He elaborated upon his experience. Franklin became an educator because he felt he had a lot to offer young people. So, he decided to become an educator, and now he currently serves as an administrator and coach. Frank shared that he was introduced to firearms on the streets as a teen. He did not grow up with guns in his home. However, he grew up in a dangerous neighborhood and saw weapons all the time. He stated, "I do not own a firearm yet, but I had planned to take the course and purchase a weapon. I saw people get shot and killed in my hometown." Frank reflected upon an incident in his focus group interview,

> one year, a student pulled a weapon on another student, and I reacted, lunging at him; thankfully, the gun did not discharge. I wished at that moment I had a weapon. I would like to carry once I took the conceal carry training.

Gina

Gina works in the Southwestern Rocky Mount region of the United States. She was first introduced to a firearm for hunting at age six. Gina has been an educator for the last 12 years. She served as a special education teacher in a Junior High self-contained classroom. Her first introduction to a firearm was at the age of six. Her father took her hunting. Gina explained that only two people concealed carry in her family primarily for protection. Her experience with a firearm consisted of taking a kid safety hunting class when she was young. She now attends target and range shooting lessons, as well as weapon training session. Gina declared,

> A good man with a gun can defeat a nasty person with a gun. More people would have died if it hadn't been for the SRO, at last, the Maryland school shooting. If a teacher had the necessary training and desires to carry, why not let them? There are powers in numbers. Why rely on a single SRO to secure the school when teachers might also be there to assist an SRO? My position on whether teachers should be allowed to carry concealed firearms on school grounds made me feel more secure. The fact that I would not be the only one carrying a weapon at my school gave me a sense of security. I believed guns could help protect everyone against intruders.

Helen

Helen was a retired administrator who worked in the South-Central region of the United States for 38 years as an administrator. At the time of the data collection, Helen had been retired for two years. She shared her experiences with firearms with her family and school. She elaborated on her introductions to firearms and her family members who served in the military and trained concealed carriers. Helen discussed that educators should only carry if they choose to carry, not be made to carry. Helen stressed,

I supported educators carrying weapons in schools. I chose not to carry when I was leading the school. I did not carry, but I would've been willing to be trained in the school district, but I was on my way out to retire. It was my responsibility to keep students and staff safe. I would have done anything to keep them safe.

Irene

Irene had been a middle school educator for 25 years in the Midwest region of the United States. Her first introduction to a firearm was by her father. She expounded that there were guns in her home, and she wanted to know how to use them safely. At the time of the data collection, she did not carry a firearm, although she had a permit to carry a concealed firearm. Irene further expounded,

I felt obligated to safeguard my kids within reason. I should not have to compromise myself for my kids. I don't believe it should be mandatory, and I didn't know how a teacher would respond if they knew the student. I would carry it in school if it meant protecting a student and myself. I felt weapons weren't a solution for mental health issues. If we addressed mental health concerns in the US, we might not need to consider weapons in schools.

Jenna

Jenna had worked for 10 years as an educator in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. She was introduced to firearms in a conceal carry class for school employees. Jenna explained that school employees and parents could conceal carry within a K-12 school setting if they had a concealed carry permit in response to the questionnaire. After training, Jenna purchased her first handgun and begun carrying it in the classroom setting. Jenna and her husband advocated for firearms. She and her husband were big fans of owning firearms and going out to target practice with them regularly. They conceal carry everywhere they go. They

ensured that their firearms were secured when they were at home. Jenna's region had put together a conceal carry class for all educators only two weeks after the Sandy Hook shooting. Jenna attended the class and wanted answers and loved it. Before buying her first firearm, she immediately begun doing more training and classes with firearms. Jenna stated that she would take a bullet for a student. She stated,

> My personal belief was that if more teachers decided to conceal carry, our schools would be a safer place for our children to learn. I could protect myself and my students in the classroom. I had run through so many scenarios in my head, and I set up my classroom appropriately. I always thought about the "what if," and I prepared myself for those scenarios daily.

Results

Results and themes arose through an in-depth review of individual interviews, questionnaires, and online focus group conversations. All participants in this research fulfilled the requirements for age, educator, working in a K-12 school, being permitted to conceal carry while working in a K-12 school, and working in a state that permits educators to conceal carry. A comprehensive approach was utilized and collecting three data types allowed for developing a trustworthy and valid theme. This qualitative study evaluated the consistency of the results by checking the consistency of data provided by three data collecting methods. By assessing the consistency of three data gathering methods, this qualitative analysis examined the consistency of the results and defined meaningful categories (Patton, 2002).

All interviews and focus group responses were transcribed utilizing Zoom and a transcription service. Following participant review, the researcher analyzed each transcript and written response for common words, phrases, and themes. The act of coding consisted of

evaluating data and eliminating irrelevant and unnecessary information. The qualitative methodological approach required the researcher to bracket their personal bias and experience from gathering information (Moustakas, 1994). Complying with qualitative analysis methodology, the researcher listed, categorized, reduced, removed, grouped, thematized, and identified constituents, thereby verifying the emerging themes (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher linked codes central to the significance of this study to the participants' shared lived experiences.

Essential topics were classified and grouped in a logical sequence to present a summary of the lived experience. The researcher then identified themes related to the central research question and three sub-questions of the lived experience of educators who desired to conceal carry in K-12 schools. A common finding emerged by organizing the results to the central question and three sub-questions. Related codes using data analysis methods produced significant results. Themes gathered weight and became more powerful when the same phrases, words, and descriptions repeatedly appeared throughout the text. Three themes emerged following the synthesis and triangulation of data by reduction *training*, *safety*, and *protection*.

Theme Development

Analysis was conducted and reviewed to develop themes based on the transcriptions from the interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Themes were developed throughout the interviews. One question asked was, "How do you feel about other educators in your school or district carrying a firearm in school? Unanimously, each educator responded that they felt safer knowing their colleagues were carrying in school. However, one educator had different opinions, sharing that guns are not for everyone and not everyone should carry a firearm in school. The emergence of themes began here.

Theme 1: Safety

Moreover, after the interviews had been conducted, it became abundantly evident that the topic of safety was woven throughout each participant group. Before the start of the interviews, questionnaire responses begun to reveal the first theme. Once the interviews were conducted, this theme became evident in all data units. In all the embedded units, the theme of safety was prominent. In all interviews and focus groups, the issue of safety was a constant topic of conversation. Educators who carried concealed weapons in K-12 schools were passionate about student safety. Every participant responded that safety was their top priority for carrying firearms. Gina expounded,

> Any teacher who wanted to carry a concealed firearm in class should be able to. Training everybody interested is a great concept. However, not all teachers would like to carry guns in the classroom, and that's OK. Having the option and making it clear that teachers are armed might reduce school shootings. This could be a temporary approach to research and gains time to address underlying causes of school violence, such as mental health and bullying. Armed guards protect the president, politicians, their families, and even celebrities, yet having educators carry firearms to protect students and teachers is met with ridicule.

> However, Irene was concerned stating, "not everyone in my school should be able to conceal carrying." Although, the frequency of safety was maintained, as were the participants' opinions on carrying a firearm in a K-12 school. Safety resounded as a key theme during interviews and questionnaire responses from all 10 participants. The 10 participants were adamant that safety was a top priority while carrying a concealed weapon in a K-12 school.

Each participants held safety as the most significant reason for carrying a firearm in a K-12 school.

Individual interviews and the focus group sessions exposed safety as the primary reason the educators desired to conceal carry in school. Anna expounded, "student health and safety are a top priority when carrying a firearm in a school, above all else, even above learning." Her sentiment excluded mental and emotional health, and physical safety reigned over those issues. Anna further stated, "cases have shown that in some situations, deaths were prevented by those carrying a firearm, and deaths were multiplied when an intruder could have been stopped had someone had a firearm." Donald, an administrator, agreed with Anna stating, "when speaking of safety, you first must be safe mentally and physically sound. Then you must reach and demonstrate competency continually when using a firearm." Carol emphasized that "carrying a firearm has made our school better and safer if done right, or it can be the worst possible thing you could do if done wrong in a school. Jenna extended her answer about safety, "I don't believe all educators could carry without good training and decision-making skills. Having a backup plan made me feel safer. I'd never urge somebody to carry if they weren't comfortable."

Donald, an administrator, discussed teachers carrying weapons at school. He stated that a firearm isn't for everyone; not all educators should be on a conceal carry team. Educators must be selected to be on the safety team. Helen, a former administrator, said, "Before I retired, educators carried." As principal, she had to protect both students and educators. She responded,

I spent years protecting my school's students. I encouraged district-wide conceal carry. I would've done everything to protect students and employees. Students attended school to learn. Student safety was our responsibility. My middle school had one armed SRO

but no shootings. If permitted, I'd conceal a handgun. I had a bat, no gun. When our

district considered school weapons, I was preparing to retire. Absolutely I would carry.

Focus group members shared they carried guns for protection. Gina said, "I felt safer

knowing armed educators protected students and staff." Carol concurred, "Armed educators

could protect students. Donald stated, "Teachers and students are at risk without concealed carry

in schools. Without concealed carry in schools, teachers and children are victims."

Firearms provided a deterrent.

The cost of hiring a security guard at every school in the U. S. cost around $50,000 per

year for one new armed guard (Jonson et al., 2020). Nine out of the ten participants believed

educators who have received proper training are a great deterrent that has kept unwanted visitors

away from schools. On the contrary, Brooke stated, that if there was a school resource officer,

no educator would have to carry a firearm to ensure the school is safe. The only person who

would know who had a firearm in the building was the SRO. Despite this, six participants agreed

that the ability to conceal carry in school was both an equalizer and a deterrent.

As most schools lacked resistance, the participants stated schools would be targeted by

shooters who knew they would not face opposition. Jenna added, "If we established a deterrent,

we could prevent many of these shootings from occurring." Gina said, "carrying a firearm in

school enabled instructors to be prepared to fight back since they no longer relied just on desks

for security. I do not need to shrink and cower behind a desk." Anna intervened, noting, "Armed

educators would be better equipped to react to a mass shooting at a school and

discourage potential shooters."

According to participants, educators who are armed would be better able to respond to a

mass shooting crisis at a school and deter intruders from carrying out a shooting. Gina voiced,

"carrying a firearm in school allows educators to be prepared to fight back because they now have an equalizer and not just protection from a desk."

Brooke elaborated,

I had never been engaged in a school shooting. As far as I know, no school shootings had happened in this region. There were firearms fired near the school, but no school shootings. I think this is because educators could conceal carry in school. For over 20 years, educators had been allowed to carry in school.

Trust

Several K-12 schools have prepared for the threat of gun violence by introducing and arming educators (Vossekuil et al., 2016; Rajan & Branas, 2018; Stone, 2017; Stroebe et al. 2017; Tanner et al., 2018). Understanding that intruders are looking to hurt innocent people was the first step in building trust in the schools. Educators needed to rely on each other during a crisis. Every participant concurred that trust was essential when carrying a firearm. They acknowledged that they were comfortable knowing that educators in the next classroom or in the school was potentially packing.

Elizabeth voiced concerns on trusting school police. She shared remembering the video shown of an SRO hiding during a school shooting instead of protecting students. Elizabeth emphasized her disappointment of the school law enforcement,

After seeing the video of the SRO hiding from an active shooter, I do not trust everyone but the coworkers whom I work with, I can depend on. I have learned from the Parkland tragedy that SROs aren't always trustworthy. I believed it is possible to increase the level of security in our schools throughout the day by having armed educators in the classroom

and school. I trust the staff I work with who would carry. I know they have my back and

are armed to protect everyone as I will. I trust the educators in my school.

Donald further added that he trusted and believed in each of the educators who had been

selected for the firearm team.

No one will think you took reasonable precautions to keep the students safe without a

firearm. Educators on our school's weapons safety team offered me peace of mind. I'm

secure with them. I think having concealed firearms had made the school safer. In the

wrong hands, it's a school's greatest enemy. Knowing my trained school family carried a

weapon has boosted my trust level.

Jenna was a firm believer adding,

If we did not allow concealed carry in our school, and someone would come into the

building or school hurting or killing our children, it would be difficult to go to sleep at

night thinking about what else I could have done to protect the children. Our school

district had allowed concealed carry because they believed it is the best way to protect

children. We have been safe, and no mass shootings happened in our schools.

Theme 2: Training

Training themes emerged across all participant interviews and questionnaire responses.

All but one of the educators in the study believed that training was the second highest recurring

theme. Nine of the participants indicated that if weapons were utilized in the school, everyone

who concealed-carried needed to have certification and frequent handgun training beyond target

practice to be prepared in the event of an invasion on school premises.

Carol expressed the importance that no one at her school was aware of who was in

possession of a handgun.

You don't know which educators carried firearms. Imagine a school shooting video game with active-shooter exercises simulating police. I practiced firing at a red dot on a paper plate. The simulated training could stress teachers, and they shouldn't carry concealed weapons. Unprepared teachers could freeze during a school shooting, endangering kids or others. Many educators couldn't manage these circumstances when we practiced.

When discussing the possibility of an active shooter situation at the school, the participants agreed that should a situation arise in which firearms were required, everyone who held a concealed-carry certification should maintain regular firearm training. That goes far beyond target practice using simulation to be prepared for an intruder in the school building. Donald added,

With a concealed carry firearm, you don't know which educator is carrying a weapon in school. This is discreet, and no teacher or student knows who is carrying. Because students had no idea who had a weapon, they were not distracted.

Elizabeth, an educator, believed that proper firearm training would make schools safer in the event of a school shooting. Brooke, a mother-of-three, planned to work on her concealed carry permit this summer. "I have kids in my school. I want to know they would be protected." Should that time come, she wanted to feel confident in her ability to protect her family, students, and school family. Donald stated, "carrying a gun is a great responsibility and a huge task, like teaching. It's like a CDL bus driver. It's a big responsibility, and not for everyone. I believe you need to keep training."

On the other hand, Frank had yet to take the conceal carry training. However, he shared,

I understood that a high level of training is needed so I could be prepared if ever duty is called. I believe a high level of training is necessary to conceal in a school. I planned to take the course soon. I want to effectively protect and save my staff and students, and, of course, myself.

Firearm training also ranked high with Elizabeth; she expressed how necessary and why training was essential.

As a teacher, I needed to be ready for an active shooter in my classroom. My school provided educators' training, so I enrolled. I could use school items (pencils, ruler) to protect myself and my students. However, I pack a firearm. If threatened, I would protect my students and myself.

Although educators could be qualified to use firearms responsibly, no evidence-based guidelines were readily available to help policymakers construct the necessary training for educators. Nine out of ten participants voiced that continuing education training requirements were needed to maintain educators' preparedness for an intruder incident (Rajan & Branas, 2018). Brooke added, "Anyone carrying in a school should be properly trained and certified, including renewal. If you carry, be prepared."

Teachers in states where gun-carry laws exist agreed that they felt safer and secure carrying firearms in their schools. Gina further stated that schools not allowed to carry firearms must follow the school's lockdown procedures. She further expressed that having educators pose as body armor for the students was an impractical strategy.

Experience and motivation to conceal carry a weapon

Anna was exposed before she could remember, she said. Her family hunted and played sports with guns. First, a .22 rifle, then .22 pistols, cheap hunting rifles, high powered hunting rifles, and shotguns.

Growing up, my family and I used rifles to eliminate pests and hunt. Second, we went to shooting ranges to practice with different calibers and distances. Ranges are fun, competitive, and safe. I'm good with guns.

Eight of the 10 participants were 16 years of age or under when they were exposed to a firearm. All participants' excluding Frank, were introduced by a father or parent. The other seven participants described very similar introductions and experiences to firearms as children. They each described their introduction to a firearm was by their father or family members.

Frank was exposed to a weapon aged 12 on the streets of his hometown. He had no official handgun training, although he had fired on the streets of his hometown. He wanted to become a concealed carrier. Irene and Jenna were the only participants who were introduced to weapons as adults. Jenna grew attracted to carrying a firearm after learning about the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, and Irene wanted to carry one in case she needed to protect herself.

Theme 3: Protection

Data study ranked protection as the third most essential element. Educators were selected or volunteered to carry concealed weapons in the K-12 schools where it is legal to do so. Educators were either selected by their school to be a part of the school safety program or held a concealed carry firearm and had a right to carry. Concealed carrying was a choice and not mandated. However, this may be seen as an extra responsibility for the school for student and

staff safety. This option offered additional protection for school personnel and saved not only the lives of students but also the lives of staff.

Donald argued, schools need qualified individuals using firearms who are prepared to protect and defend. Regardless of whether they are security guards, sharpshooters, or selected members of the school's staff, all of them are important to maintaining the safety of students and staff.

Participants saw themselves as protectors. They viewed themselves as their students' first line of protection against any potential danger within the school. Irene stated that "the students relied on us to keep them safe." During the interview, Anna said she carried a concealed weapon because, "I am here to protect my students; they know I don't want anything terrible to happen to them."

Educators who are permitted to carry concealed weapons in states have given the educational system a powerful tool for ensuring the safety and protection of those in school. Educators' readiness centered not on finding and eliminating suspected shooters but on protecting students in their care within the school, classrooms, or other locations they oversee. All respondents maintained they would be prepared to protect the students.

All responders acknowledged they would safeguard their students. Today's schools implement lockdown drills and safety programs. All ten participants mentioned protection. Protection prompted participants to conceal carry in K-12 schools. Carol, Irene, Frank, Anne, and Brooke vowed to protection students and work family. Following the tragic events at Sandy Hook, Carol decided she needed a gun. However, she still had to work on her shooting technique. She shared getting her firearm,

The day I obtained my firearm, teaching became less stressful. I wanted to safeguard our students since response time could cost lives. Before, having a weapon I could only shelter myself and the students with my body.

Irene followed by stating, "how would it feel if you didn't do something and stop a shooter? How would it alter a life if someone doesn't do something?" Frank acknowledged and agreed with Irene, stating that as an administrator and coach, I am here to defend and protect every student. Once I become licensed to carry a weapon, I would be able to protect my students and school. Anne elaborated on protection, "I'll defend every student. I carried a firearm to school for years. As a child, I wondered whether I could shoot and kill. Due to gun training, I'm confident in saying that I would because of the training."

Anne said that she had concealed the weapon on her person so she would not be in the way if there were any encounters with her students. The students had no idea she was carrying a weapon if they touched her. Brooke, along with her husband, practiced shooting regularly. In the event of an emergency, she would have no choice but to use self-defense. During a focus group interview, she highlighted the importance of protecting innocent schoolchildren. She shared,

> Educators put student safety first. It's my job to safeguard my pupils and return them unscathed. I ensured they are safe. These are like ours. As a teacher, I know using a gun at school is a big responsibility. I would shoot to defend my school family. Intruders realize schools without guns are defenseless.

Donald exclaimed, "Guns can level the playing field for a potential or otherwise victim. don't know whether a gun protects anybody, but it certainly had the potential to be both a weapon for good and a tool for evil."

School protection programs

Several participants addressed better school security, such as ALICE. Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate were utilized. This program was among the first to remove lockdown for aggressive invaders. Anna commended concealed carry training for safety.

ALICE stands for Alert, which means a dangerous intruder is on school grounds. Upgraded the single-option, conventional lockdown technique to make it harder for a violent attacker to access a room or area. Informing is offering violent critical situation players and first responders' real-time information. Counter is the final resort against a violent intruder. E indicates Evacuating, departing, and escaping the deadly intruder (Jonson et al., 2020). Gina shared that her school participated in Stop the Bleed.

> Every school in our district is equipped with a Stop the Bleed kit. My school only
>
> offered the Stop the Bleed program, not Conceal Carry. Although, we must be certified
>
> and had the continuous weapon practice to carry in the building. Protecting my students
>
> made me a better teacher.

Two respondents said their schools conducted frequent safety exercises. Frank said, "my state required schools to do periodic lockdown and evacuation exercises. Standard lockdown practice was to move students away from windows and cover curtains. Lock doors and lights; sit silently." Donald stated, "We do safety drills once a month in our schools. Drills should be taken seriously by everyone in the school.

Trust

The subtheme aligned with the theme of protection was trust. Several participants agreed that knowing their colleagues were packing in the school made them feel protected. Anna shared

knowing her colleagues carried empowered her "my level of safety would not change. I feel safe in school with or without carrying in school."

Brooke elaborated, "knowing my colleagues concealed carried gave me a piece of mind and lessened my fear. I'd go to their room in an emergency since I trusted them and know they're prepared." Donald was sure his school's program prepared the firearm team. "If educators are regularly trained, the school will be safer," he said. Helen shared, "I am relieved knowing students and staff were safe." Irene remarked,

> I felt protected knowing educators carried guns. I feel safe knowing other educators are trained to carry firearms at our school and will use them if necessary. Knowing colleagues carried comforted me. As I don't carry a gun and trust them, I'd go to their room in a crisis.

Outlier Data and Findings

One outlier finding was not aligned with a specific research question or theme. Two participants from the Western and Rocky Mountain regions specifically mentioned that regular citizens could conceal carry on school grounds during interviews and focus groups. All concealed carry license holders, regardless of whether they were educators, could carry on a K-12 campus. Jenna said, "Anyone with a concealed carry can come on campus with a firearm. This was a state law and a right for individuals to carry if they had a license."

The focus group participants stated they were uncomfortable with such an open policy. The participants believed that regular persons should be prohibited from possessing weapons in the proximity of schools or on school grounds. This could contribute to the reduction of the number of shootings that occurred in schools.

In her interview, Brooke shared that her state allowed citizens with concealed carry licenses to have weapons on school premises. She also agreed with Jenna that people have a right to conceal carry regardless of if they were educators. Brooke expounded, the Second Amendment, which protects the right to keep and bear arms, is a cornerstone of our country's constitution and should not be altered. Once imposed, restrictions are difficult, if not impossible, to remove.

Research Question Responses

The research questions would be concisely answered in this section. The central research topic and sub-questions were stated, followed by an explanation. In addition, brief and direct narrative responses to each of the study questions were presented below, based on the themes generated by participants in the preceding section. This study aimed to give educators a voice and shared their desire for concealing in school.

The central research question and three sub-questions centered on the participants' perceptions of educators who desired and who does conceal carry in a K-12 school. The interview questions were crafted to understand the desires of educators who conceal carrying in K-12 schools. Through the participant responses, the research questions were addressed. The answers to the research questions do not exist in current research, and they were essential to addressing safety in schools and helping implement school safety plans.

Central Research Questions

The central research question asked, what were the lived experiences of educators who desire and were licensed to carry concealed weapons in school? All participants were confident in sharing their desire to conceal carry in their K-12 school. In relation to this line of inquiry, the primary themes were developed from the participants' responses of safety, training, and

protection. All of the participants shared their desire to conceal carry in a K-12 school. Their respective motives for carrying firearms during their personal time were then shared and expressed.

Participants acknowledged their responsibility and desire to educate their students and ensured their safety while at school. They all wanted to do more than only educate but also keep their students safe in the school environment. Therefore, the right to carry a firearm in a school Environment provided educators with a means to defend themselves and others. Educators' rights to bear arms had given them an additional measure of safety in the school. During the interviews and focus groups, every single participant used the terms "safety," "training," and "protection" to represent the practice of carrying a firearm in a K-12 school.

Participants openly discussed the reasons for their desire to carry a concealed weapon, one of the most common being the rising number of school shootings. Every educator who participated agreed that they had a personal stake in the safety of their student and the school community if an intruder was present. As Jenna claimed, "If it meant protecting my students from danger, I would take a bullet for them."

Subsequently, these educators were devoted to the welfare and education of their students. They cared deeply about the safety of their students and worked hard to ensure that every student went home unharmed. Thus, the reason to carry concealed weapons in school. Carol stressed that "carrying a firearm has made our school better and safer if done well, or it may be the worst conceivable thing you could do if not secured properly in a school." Gina shared, "I solely carried my firearm for protection." Donald expounded, "no one would think you took reasonable precautions to keep the students safe without a firearm." Gina shared,

My desire to conceal carry in school stemmed from hearing of the Sandy Hook massacre, and the brutality emboldened me to take the concealed carry course. I passed and purchased a firearm. I routinely practice ensuring my skills are prepared in the event of an intruder.

Sub Question One

How does your desire to conceal carry a handgun at school empower your ability to defend yourself and others? What is the most significant issue you have with educators carrying concealed weapons in the school?

The findings regarding the investigation indicated that the educators believed that possessing a firearm while in the school compound improved their capacity to counterbalance potential shooters intruding into their work environment. For instance, when asked if they would use a weapon to defend themselves and students, one of the participants remarks, "why couldn't I carry a pistol to defend myself?" In addition, those who carried concealed handguns to their schools thought such weapons would help them protect themselves and their students if invaders attacked them.

Moreover, the research participants indicated that carrying a firearm made them feel more secure, safer, and prepared in the event of an attack within the school environment. 70% of the study subjects had their first encounter with firearms in childhood, while the remaining 30% experienced the weapons as adults. Therefore, from the vested interest theory perspective, the educators demonstrated maximum attitude-behavior consistency because they believe that carrying concealed weapons to school enhanced their safety and that of their students if intruders were to attack them within the workplace.

Sub Question Two

What specific experience(s) influenced educators' desires to conceal carry, and why do you believe educators should be allowed to conceal carry in a K-12 school, and how does that impact your feelings of safety?

The study results suggested that safety concerns associated with past school shooting incidents have motivated the educators to carry concealed weapons to school regularly. The participants strongly agreed that unarmed teachers and other school personnel often had limited options when confronted with malicious shooters in the workplace. One of the participants noted that, "in past incidents of school shootings, the media has shown helpless teachers who are unable to defend themselves or their students from the armed attackers." Thus, the educators believed they should do everything possible to ensure their safety and that of the learners, including possessing and bringing a concealed firearm to school.

Alexander (2021) observed that educators and other public-school leaders in the United States served on the frontline of students' needs, including protecting them from potential harm by intruders. According to Jonson (2017), the school shooting incidents in Columbine High School, Sandy Hook Elementary School, and Virginia Tech demonstrated the vulnerability of staff and students to the perpetrators. In such cases, the study participants considered themselves defenseless and victims devoid of equalizers. When attacked by armed intruders, their option is to flee the scene or hide from the offender. Therefore, the educators that carried a concealed firearm in the workplace minimized their vulnerability, enabling them to battle the shooter and ensured their safety and that of the students.

Sub Question Three

How do you describe your experiences in correlation with the Second Amendment Rights, and how has it driven your beliefs and desire to protect and defend yourself and the school?

The study results indicated that the teachers strongly supported the Second Amendment Rights, suggesting that the Constitutional provision should be preserved and promoted to protect all citizens, including the educators. Jenna interjected, "the Second Amendment, I believed it allowed the freedom of choice. I believed that it is important to be able to exercise our right to bear arms, and it is a freedom given to us in the United States to protect us."

In addition, the questionnaire and interviews revealed that the educators believed they had a right to carry a weapon to protect and defend themselves in different public spaces, including the workplace. One of the participants noted that "nobody should mess with the Amendment." Passed by the U.S. Congress in September 1789 before being modified in December 1791, the Second Amendment constitutes the Bill of Rights by protecting the right to keep and bear arms. The Supreme Court's interpretation of Amendment II over the years suggests that gun ownership is an individual's Constitutional self-defense right.

Consequently, Congress often faced challenges regulating guns across the country (Cornell & Cornell, 2018). Proponents of teacher gun ownership often cited the prevalence of school shootings and the need for the school leaders' self-defense and role in protecting students. Donald said, "Most people in this state believed in their second amendment rights, and they have the right to carry their gun or have a gun anywhere they want." Gina, from the Southwestern Rocky Mountain region, concluded, "I know we do have the right to have firearms as do others in this region, and I take that right seriously."

However, the opponents contended that having the educators play an additional law enforcement role is not feasible. Bases on Rajan and Branas (2018), teachers lacked the training and skills to use firearms to protect learners within the school environment. In addition, the country lacked practical mechanisms to determine the educators' willingness to execute the responsibility responsibly. Gina claimed it is her right to conceal carry.

It is personal, but I have the second amendment on my side. My rights will not be infringed upon. I believe in the right to keep and bear weapons, and as an American citizen, I feel that our country is the safest because of the strength of our military forces and the ability to keep and bear arms.

Despite the arguments for and against teacher gun ownership, the research findings indicated that most educators in states allowed to carry supported the right to keep and bear arms.

Summary

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> infringed upon. I believe in the right to keep and bear weapons, and as an American
> citizen, I feel that our country is the safest because of the strength of our military forces
> and the ability to keep and bear arms.

Despite the arguments for and against teacher carrying in school the research findings indicated that most educators in states that are allowed to carry supported the right to keep and bear arms. All 10 participants shared that they felt safer with a firearm at school, which was their primary motivation for their desire to conceal carry a firearm to school. Nine of the 10

educators had a family member teach them how to use a handgun when they were very young. They learned about weapon safety and how to handle firearms.

The participants expressed a desire to conceal and carry a firearm in a K-12 school environment to improve school safety. Most educators acknowledged that continuous training was imperative if they or their colleagues should carry it in the school. The educators' expertise with firearms contributed to their confidence in handling firearms in the K-12 setting. The educators shared how safe they felt knowing their colleagues were carrying concealed at their school, which they attributed mainly to the school and state's culture.

Although this study only sought to hear from educators who desire to carry in a K-12 setting, the purpose of this research was not to assess whether concealed carry deterred active shooters or school shootings in K-12 but to understand what drives educators to conceal carry in school. However, only nine states currently permit firearms on K-12 school grounds, and schools have chosen the approach of allowing educators to conceal carry in a K-12 school to ensure safety.

This research study gave me insight into the educators' mindsets supporting concealed carry in the K-12 environment. Since the escalation in K-12 school shootings, the completion of this research, and the recent atrocities in Uvalde, Texas, my opinion on educators who desire to concealed carrying in K-12 schools have shifted substantially. I see educators as the first line of defense for protecting themselves and their students. I believe it might be a reality in more states with a team of educators who have been vetted, passed a mental health background check and gotten regular training. I hope other states can utilize this information to implement safety measures in their K-12 schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This chapter described educators' experiences conceal-carrying in the K-12 classroom.

Drake and Yurvati (2018) revealed that just nine states had K-12-gun licenses. Participants were

K-12 educators from states that allow firearms in school. Ten educators in total, seven were

teachers, superintendent, two administrators, in which one was a and a retired administrator who

worked 38 years in the school system, participated in the study. Nine states allowed educators to

conceal carry in K-12 schools: Idaho, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota,

Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming. Other states allowed guns on campus.

Research on educators' desire to carry concealed firearms in K-12 classrooms is scarce.

Questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews provided the data. Participant narratives reinforced

the themes of safety, training, and protection, which were then addressed considering the leading

research topic and sub-questions. Educators who participated in this study were committed to

keeping their skills sharp while having a weapon in school. In the case of an active shooter in

the classroom, educators believed that they would be unable to protect themselves or their

students without a firearm.

Overview

This transcendental phenomenology aimed to understand the lived experiences of

educators who desire and were authorized to carry concealed guns in school. In recruiting the

participants, a post was placed on social media accompanying a recruitment letter. Individuals

were selected based on the requirements needed to participate in the study, and pseudonyms

were used to protect their identities.

Each participant was individually interviewed, participated in focus groups, and answered

the questionnaire, and four individuals attended a Zoom focus group. Each participant discussed

their experience and desire to carry a concealed firearm at school, and the result summary would be discussed in this chapter. This chapter would address, the following sections: a summary of the findings, discussion; implications; delimitations and limitations; recommendations for future research; responses to the main research topic, three guiding questions that conclude with responses to the main research topic and three guiding questions.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how educators described their desires and lived experiences of carrying a firearm in a K-12 school. A transcendental phenomenological design was used in this study to examine the essence of the participants' experiences. This study relied on my epistemological assumption to fulfill the study's purpose, which was to convey the participants' experiences. I needed to establish rapport with the participants to obtain the necessary information to conduct this research. The problem guiding this study was educators who desired to carry a weapon in K-12 schools and how the state laws affected districts and school policies on weapons on school grounds. Since mass school shootings have risen, schools have sought to provide more secure ways to protect schools (Madfis, 2016).

This section's purpose was to share the findings of this study in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The empirical research on school shootings was discussed in length in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two, the theoretical foundations for this study were presented. From a theoretical position, Crano (1997) vested interest theory formed the framework of educators who desired to conceal carry in the K-12 school. This discussion part is structured such that the results are first compared with the empirical literature and then with the theoretical literature. This order was chosen in order to maximize clarity.

Interpretation of Findings

Data gathered using qualitative questionnaires, focus group interviews, and semi structured interviews before being analyzed using the (Moustakas, 1994) method. Following the coding of key statements, subthemes arose, which were refined into the study's core themes: safety, training, and protection. The themes, research-question replies, participant comments, my position as the researcher, the theoretical framework, my philosophical assumptions, and empirical investigation were all analyzed together, creating meaning and recommended change.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: identified safety, training, and protection. These themes were apparent even in the early stages of interviewing participants and the focus groups. The first theme was that all participants believed that when carrying a firearm, safety supersedes their reason for carrying it in a K-12 school. The second theme identified and agreed upon by all, but one participant, believed continuous training was imperative. All educators, but one, agreed that continuous training was essential if they would carry in a K-12 school. The third most common topic among the responses from all 10 participants was "protection." It was clear from the comments of those who participated in the study that protection was a significant factor in their decision to conceal carry in K-12 schools.

Safety is a Must in an Education System.

As a result of the recent string of school shootings, there has been an increase in the number of requests to arm teachers with firearms to strengthen school security and safeguard students against the threat of school shootings (Lenhardt et al., 2018; Smart & Schell, 2021). The idea of safety was not only blatantly obvious and embedded in each theme, but it was also intertwined across the succeeding themes and subthemes. Participants shared their own desires

about concealed carry in K-12 educational establishments. The 10 individuals who took part in the study agreed that they carried a firearm to safeguard the students, staff, and themselves while in the school. The 10 participants unanimously cited their desire to protect their students and themselves as the primary motivation for their decision to carry concealed weapons at school.

Concerning the first theme, the viewpoints of eight out of 10 participants showed a level of coherence about the significance of safety within the school district. Although there have been no incidents involving armed educators, the number of educators who have been murdered in other states has significantly increased. In states where it is legal for educators to carry concealed weapons in elementary, middle, and high schools, all nine of the 10 participants mentioned how much safer they felt in their schools due to the presence of other armed colleagues. One educator felt more secure with a school resource officer carrying in the school. All the participants are of the opinion that creating a secure and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom is one of the most important things that can be done to facilitate learning.

There were questions about educators having firearms in schools, but a few participants shared that firearms in their schools were not locked up in cabinets. Donald, Elizabeth, and Frank mentioned that lockers could be broken into, so they concealed them on their bodies. Several participants viewed this as a safer option, and they never part from their firearms. Additionally, Donald shared that he placed his farm in his boot. Coworkers were not privileged to know who was carrying. Although no one knew who was carrying in the school, the stakeholders and parents knew that educators and administrators carried. Grace admitted that educators in her district were permitted to carry a firearm in school, but they were not obligated to disclose this fact to anyone else in the school. Another participant shared that they did not want to know if the educators were carrying.

Participants in this research were aware of their responsibility to ensure the safety of their school, not just for themselves but also for their students. The participants expressed their confidence in their ability to protect themselves and their students while carrying their firearms. Knowing they had a firearm at their disposal would help them to defend themselves and their students in the event of an invasion. The participants shared that they never left home without their firearms and indicated that students and staff members should be able to attend school free from the possibility of suffering harm, peril, or loss. Regardless of the result, all participants agreed that they had a vested interest in the safety of their students and were prepared to make sacrifices to guarantee that everyone was protected.

Continuous Firearm Training.

Many of the participants came from jurisdictions where firearms were permitted in schools and had been familiar with firearms ever since they were young children. Most of the participants were first exposed to firearms through their families, who used them for various purposes, including defense, collecting, hunting, and target practice. Most of the participants who took part in the discussion believed it was essential to train educators on handling firearms. They believed that this was the most effective approach to ensure the safety of the students while they were at school. The educators must serve as the first line of defense for the students and protect them from potential harm. Donald had a passionate view on safety,

> It is not for everyone, and no employee should be required to be on a firearm safety team. The training process should be always ongoing. In our school system, it is mandatory, and receiving firearm training is an essential component of carrying concealed in the school.

Donald shared that training would help to ensure the safety of the school. Educators throughout the states that permitted firearms in school were now participating in intensive firearms training to improve their readiness for the possibility of school shootings. The participants acknowledged that a third of the school staff already carried firearms on their person. One primary concern for educators was educators had a lack of training. Based on the state laws, any additional training besides the conceal carry for educators is based on state-by-state law. Not all states required any additional training beyond the conceal carry course. Most participants believed that carrying a firearm should be limited to just those educators who have extensive training and were well trained on protection, safety precautions, and other pertinent themes. Jenna shared her concerns about educators carrying firearms in schools,

> My only concern was if the educator would not always keep the firearm on their body. Closets and desks can be broken into, even if they are locked. Considering this, I believed that all teachers should carry firearms throughout the school day on their body.

In addition, the participants believed that the more educators were allowed to carry a concealed weapon in the schools, the lower the possibility that attackers would see others as easy targets, hence decreasing the likelihood that they would victimize those individuals in the schools.

Protection.

The best strategy to protect students has been at the forefront of discussion for some time among school districts and administrators. Most schools have made developing a safety strategy a priority to avoid significant acts of violence a key goal. Still, no surefire method has been found to keep schools secure. Yet, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for how educators can

ensure the safety of their students. During the interviews and focus groups, discussions highlighted the importance of a protective role.

Educators included in the study saw themselves as protectors. If an intruder were to enter the school or there was a threat, the participants said they would do whatever it took to protect the students. Further, they vowed to do all they could to ensure the security of their students. Participants were adamant that the need for protection was a significant element in their desire to concealed carry in the K-12 school environment. The third main topic that emerged from gathering data focused on protection as the reason the participants decided to carry a firearm in their respective schools.

Even planned school safety measures could fall short at times. Educators expressed they worried that anybody could go through a school entrance, or a rear door left open and that even with safeguards in place to ensure that the front door is monitored, it is still possible for someone to sneak through. Furthermore, the students could give someone access through a closed rear door. This theme was of particular interest because the mission of educators is not to track down and apprehend the perpetrator during an invasion but safeguard and protect the students entrusted in their care while in the confines of the school. States that allowed educators to conceal carry in their schools were confident in their ability to defend the students in their care.

However, there are no universal strategies for keeping students 100% safe. Most schools in the United States have additional safeguards in place. Schools incorporated safeguards to enhance safety and protection, including but not limited to Crisis Intervention teams, safety committees, weapon teams, reaction training intervention programs, a closed-door policy, and monthly drills and crisis exercises. Brooke stated that, "I trusted my children's teachers to protect them at school, I'm accountable for my students' well-being while on my time in school" We

must protect our kids.

Implications for Policy and Practice

School shootings often revive divisive discussions over whether educators should be allowed to conceal carry firearms in schools to help safeguard students. This research could add to the limited information on educators who desire to carry in K-12 schools and for states still considering whether to arm educators. This dissertation's findings could help understand why educators desire to conceal carry in the K-12 school. This research would allow insight from the perspective of educators who already carry and those that desire to conceal carry in states that allow educators to conceal carry. The educators' collective knowledge and experiences concerning the factors that influence their decision to concealed carry could better guide further policy and practice recommendations in future decisions.

Implications for Policy

The findings of this research could serve as a starting point to help understand educators' perception to conceal carrying in the K-12 school setting. Restrictions on the availability of firearms and the concept of arming educators and staff members at schools continue to be a highly debated subject regarding school safety. Even though K-12 firearm restrictions were just a minor component of school safety, states should continue to evaluate them. Most states had passed legislation prohibiting weapons possession in kindergarten through twelve grade schools. To date, just nine schools allowed educators to carry a weapon with limited restrictions, although all made some exceptions (Erwin, 2019).

Based on the analysis of the findings, educators who concealed carried in most states permitted educators to carry weapons have received the necessary handgun training to carry in schools. If a person carried a firearm that a state or school district has authorized, then it is not

against the law for the individual to carry a firearm in a school (Firearms on School District Property, 2022). Educators defended their rights by citing the Second Amendment, which allowed them the right to defend themselves against school invaders. This study bought to light details regarding laws concerning educators carrying firearms in schools, which findings showed laws varied from state to state.

The findings revealed that various states authorize educators to conceal carry differently; one example is if participating in school-based programs or in another state, one must attain just a conceal carry license that allows weapons in schools. Nevertheless, each state is distinct and requires educators to comply with different guidelines when concealed carrying in the schools. In contrast, the limits imposed by other states were far less stringent when it came to educators' capabilities to conceal firearms in schools. For states looking to conceal carry in their schools, I recommend providing the school administrators and stakeholders who were opposed to concealing carrying in school data that has been established and researched to assist in easing their concerns about educators' concealing firearms in schools.

Laws could be accepted and passed if data and clarity on firearm training for educators were uniform for each state. A more precise firearm regulation program for educators and schools could assist in implementing educators to conceal carry. If there were a unified regulation on firearms in schools, states might be more likely to embrace firearm educator programs for educators. I propose that a set of standardized guidelines would make it easier to collect data and maintain consistent regulations to promote a stable firearm program in the school context, ultimately resulting in a safer educational environment. Finally, I recommend that all educators permitted to carry a firearm undergo comprehensive mental health exams.

Implications for Practice

One significant implication identified in this study showed most participants agreed that those allowed to carry in the K-12 school should have continuous training, which most believed to be essential. Educators who had obtained a concealed carry permit and carried in a K-12 school should be required to take ongoing firearm training. When it comes to concealed carry at schools, several educators emphasized the importance and need for safety. Educators believed if they were confronted, they should be confident and prepared in the event of an active shooter.

Continuous firearms training was cited multiple times throughout this study as the most effective method for ensuring school safety. The participants discussed their sense of security and how firearms gave a more comprehensive foundation for safety. Interviews and a questionnaire were utilized to gather information on educators' ability to conceal and defend themselves and their students. As a result, focusing on educators desiring to carry a firearm were willing to discuss their experiences, this study may yield valuable information on how committed educators were to bringing firearms to school.

The second implication finding from the study, exposed various states had different expectations when it comes to educators carrying in school. Bases on this study there were a few notable inconsistencies, throughout the states, some states did not require educators to have continuous training besides those attained from the conceal carry class for the initial license course. Educators were now included in the narrative to help strengthen the protection of the school which impacted this study. Given the understanding from most of the participants in this study expressing there should be a high level of training when a firearm is carried in school.

Additionally, participants in this current research indicated they felt extremely safe with their colleagues' who concealed carrying in school. This research suggests that educators who

were trained and confident in carrying weapons have had experience with firearms for a significant proportion of their lives. This study's results indicated that the participants were proponents of firearms and were emphatic about wanting to defend their students. Despite the small number of educators participating in this research, the respondents indicated that they were ready and vested in carrying firearms to protect their schools using all means necessary. The impact of school shootings propelled the desire of educators to conceal carry in K-12 schools (Education Week, 2018; Flannery et al., 2020; Malcolm & Swearer, 2018). In general, educators felt a responsibility for the safety of the schools in which they work.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The research findings are interpretable through the lens of Crano's vested interest theory. According to Crano (1997), vested interest referred to an individual's perceived significance and hedonic relevance of an attitude-implicated action's outcome. Hence, vested interest theory provided valuable insights into the influence of vested interest on attitude-behavior consistency. Silva and Greene (2019) contended that attitude-behavior consistency exists when there is a strong association between opinions and actions. As an illustration, an individual's attitude-behavior consistency is deemed high if they demonstrated a positive attitude towards protecting themselves and carrying concealed weapons to their workplace.

Consequently, the vested interest theory posits that attitude-behavior consistency is maximized when the behavior triggered by a specific attitude bears a clear and manifest hedonic relevance for the actor. A vested interest enhances attitude-behavior consistency (Adame & Miller, 2015; Silva & Greene; 2019; Stone, 2017). Therefore, the vested interest theory provided a practical framework for interpreting the present study's findings.

The educators who participated in this study and carried concealed in school demonstrated through their responses that they met all the characteristics of the vested interest theory (Crano, 1997). The vested interest theory posits that for attitudes to turn into behavior, there must be a vested interest in the attitude, which comes from five stages (sake, salience, certainty, immediacy, and self-efficacy). The study's findings lend credence to the argument that vested interest theory could be used to explain why educators in K-12 settings desire the right to carry concealed weapons.

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Crano's (1997) vested interest theory gave educators who concealed carry and those who did a voice. The study furthers Crano's (1997) vested interest theory. This research has substantial theoretical implications for K-12 educators who desire to conceal carry. Emotionally connected people are more willing to protect and maintain their belief. Many educators carried concealed weapons because of cultural norms, familial obligations, and the prevalence of gun violence in schools. "Five attitudinal characteristics" were required to commit firmly to a position: stake, salience, certainty, immediacy, and self-efficacy (Adame & Miller, 2015).

Seven of 10 educators have completed weapon conceal carry training, ongoing firearm training, scenario training, and school safety exercises. All participants followed school

standards and procedures to conceal carry in a school. Nine of the 10 educators said, "they would die protecting a student." One participant expressed that she should not have to lose her life to protect a student, but she would. Educators participating in this study concealed guns do so to protect their students and the school environment. Educators concealed firearms for safety and defense. Jenna indicated in her interview, "I would take a bullet for a student."

Empirical Implications

Since the Columbine High School and Sandy Hook massacres, educators had been on high alert for potential school shooters (Ciccotelli, 2020; Elliott, 2015; 2018; Kelly, 2017; Tatman, 2019). Empirically, this research base was expanded by the findings of this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Kankam, 2019; Moustakas, 1994). To examine lived experiences of an educator who desired and does conceal carry in K-12 schools. This study conducted interviews and questionnaires from educators based on their experience with firearms in their authentic settings and directly emphasized their experience with firearms in their K-12 schools (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). This study provided an authentic perspective from the educators and their narrative to support the impact of authentic dialogue from the educators' perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This research found a constant need for training, safety, and protection, not just for themselves but for everyone associated with the school to safeguard against prospective dangers (Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Hui, 2019; Kopel, 2017; Poston, 2009). One of the primary concerns of the participants who took part in this study was the need for ongoing training of educators who had been registered and carry in K-12 schools (Chrusciel et al., 2015; Dwyer, 2019; Owen, 2019; Rajan & Branas, 2018; School Safety Guns in Schools, 2021; Wilkins, 2022). Eight out of

10 participants agreed that teacher scenario training and firearm training at gun ranges were essential (Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Hui, 2019; K, 2017).

Carol and Elizabeth believed no additional training was needed besides conceal carry attained from receiving the initial license, and they felt conceal carry class was efficient. However, Amber, Frank, Donald, Gina, Helen, Irene, Jenna, and Elizabeth all agreed that continuous training for educators was necessary. In addition to firearm training, several school districts provided courses that included interactive scenarios for dealing with an active shooter in the building. The participants indicated that they were committed to using all measures required to defend their students and staff. As a direct result of school shootings, more and more educators desired the ability to carry concealed weapons in kindergarten through 12th-grade schools (Education Week, 2018; Flannery et al., 2020; Malcolm & Swearer, 2018). The educators' primary responsibilities were students' safety and the overall wellness of the school where they worked (Chrusciel et al., 2015; Covington, 2018).

Limitations and Delimitations

There were several delimitations included in the study. The nature of the question I sought to research led me to choose a transcendental phenomenological approach. In a phenomenological study, I sought to discover the essence of a phenomenon by understanding what educators experienced while concealing their carry in a K-12 school. It was important to me not to allow my own biases to influence the results, so I used a transcendental approach.

Participants in this study were all educators from states where concealed carry was allowed in K-12 schools. Additionally, social media was the method used to locate all participants. Participants needed to be over 18 years of age. Educators were chosen because they desired or did conceal carry in a K-12 setting. The educators all worked in K-12 schools in gun-

carrying states. Because there is little literature on educators who concealed carry in K-12 schools, new studies on this topic are needed.

There were a few limitations to the study. However, one limitation was the lack of applied theoretical literature using Crano's (1997) vested interest theory to assist with the interpretation. Although Crano's (1997) stages were adequate, the scarcity of research and analysis could had provided a more robust framework relevant to the experience of the vested interest viewpoint. One of the most significant limitations of the study was the state restrictions implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the data gathering, several participants were stricken with covid missing the focus group Zoom meeting. As a result, the document analyses, interviews, and focus groups occurred for all participants through the online format of Zoom.

The study's final significant shortcoming lacked transferability. Because the research only included individuals from nine states, the conclusions could not be extended more extensively. Although this does not negate the research's conclusions, it does need a replication of the study with educators from other states, who allowed educators to conceal carry to apply the findings more generally. The lack of transferability was the final notable drawback of the research. Since the research was limited to individuals from just nine states, the results could not be generalized with any degree of accuracy. Although this could not invalidate the implications of the research, it would demand replication of the study with educators from other states that are permitted to concealed carry in K-12 schools in order to apply the results more broadly.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study made valuable revelations about the relationship between the educators' lived experiences and their desire to carry concealed firearms to school. From the VIT perspective, the

findings suggested that the teachers exhibited maximum attitude-behavior consistency regarding concealed firearms and the desire to carry them to the workplace because they believed that the weapons helped them protect themselves and students from armed intruders. In addition, the research revealed that the educators' experiences with school shootings influenced their desire to arm themselves to ensure their safety and that of the learners. Moreover, educators supported the Second Amendment and its promotion in learning institutions.

However, existing literature depicted educators gun ownership as a highly controversial subjected with conflicting viewpoints. Proponents believed that educators could be armed to foster their Constitutional self-defense right per the Second Amendment and enhanced their ability to protect students in their care. In contrast, the opponents claimed that the educators lacked the necessary training and skills to execute such tasks responsibly (Rajan & Branas, 2018). Hence, there is a need for further scholarly inquiries to address the emerging issues regarding teacher gun ownership and the desire to carry the armaments to the school environment.

The participant of this study included ten educators, with six being licensed gun owners and 70% had experienced firearms in childhood. A qualitative research approach helped develop an in-depth understanding of educators with firearms and their desire to carry the weapons to their workplace. However, the existing database on the research subject is characterized by limited qualitative research. Therefore, there is a need for further qualitative scholarly inquiries to investigate educators' lived experiences with school shootings and how the phenomena influenced their desire to carry concealed guns to school.

Accordingly, the participants in such future studies should include educator survivors of armed intruders in school settings. In other words, only educators with first-hand experience of

school shooting incidents should participate in the surveys to understand their lived experiences. In addition, future studies should assess how best to design schools to prevent potential shootings and use technology to avert school shooters' plans. Metzl et al. (2021) revealed that mental illnesses, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, are the critical contributors to mass school shootings in the United States.

Hence, more studies are required to ascertain the likelihood of mentally ill individuals engaging in school shootings. As a further recommendation, I would suggest that more states allow educators to participate in programs to enable concealed carry in their schools; this could serve as a deterrence against school shooters (Mancini et al., 2020; Newton & Globe, 2018; O'Reilly, 2018). Secure vetting, confidentiality, continuous training, and strenuous mental health background conducted regularly every three to five years for educators on a school safety team that concealed carry could help alleviate future school shootings (Background checks: Teachers, School Employees, 2014; Flannery et al., 2020; Jonson et al., Lott, 2019; RAND Corporation, 2018).

Furthermore, research is necessary to assess teachers' willingness to protect the students from intruders. Moreover, further research should explore better ways to train educators to use firearms responsibly. Investigating the suggested areas helps address the existing knowledge gap. Furthermore, research on students who have been bullied in school and their feelings harboring negative feelings toward their schools. Lastly, I would also recommend researching the uniformity of school gun laws concerning educators carrying firearms in schools, which vary from state to state.

Conclusion

Policymakers and school administrators had been compelled to address school safety after recent mass shootings (Lenhardt et al., 2018). This study addressed educators' perceptions and allowed them to voice why they desired to carry a firearm in K-12 schools. Understanding their desire for safety to conceal carry in K-12 schools provided a more well-rounded starting point for lawmakers, stakeholders, and school administrators to understand their purposes for carrying a weapon in K-12 schools and the need for school safety. Ten educators from various states that allowed educators to conceal carry in their school agreed to participate in this research study, sharing their insight on why they desire or do conceal carry in school. Nine states allowed educators to carry concealed guns to safeguard students and staff from potential threats. Even though some participants were from various states, the laws and expectations varied. The participants shared some of the same commitments in their reasoning for concealing a firearm.

Using Crano's (1997) vested interest theory, the current study explored educators who were staunch second amendment supporters of firearms and conceal carry a weapon in school. The responses given by educators to the interviews and answers on the questionnaire were clear and precise. The data were analyzed and coded, and themes were developed. Three themes emerged from an analysis of the data: training, safety, and protection. The main finding of the current study was that educators who desired and do conceal carry a firearm in school felt safe and protected due to the school shooting.

The participants believed that carrying a firearm in school made the school much safer and prepared in the event of an active shooter, establishing a safe learning environment. Lawmakers and Stakeholders in states who were allowed were strong proponents of firearms,

especially educators. Furthermore, educators shared that being able to conceal carry in K-12 schools had thwarted intruders from their school environment keeping their school family safe.

No research shows that educators who were allowed to carry had suffered a mass school shooting. Educators are seen through the lens of their role as teachers and educators, with the primary goal of fostering students' literacy and development. Educators have various responsibilities while working with students, yet they are seldom seen as guardians or given much respect. Educators are not often seen as students' first line of defense, so it's unlikely that anybody would take them seriously if they showed up to school armed.

My investigation revealed that the experiences of educators who desire to exercise concealed carry in K-12 schools had not been previously documented. Those educators who do conceal carry do so in a confidential manner. Despite the prevalence of school shootings, there are gaps in the literature on the issue. Inasmuch as educators are not often seen as protectors, studies of school shootings from that perspective have been limited. As the literature review has shown, various gaps exist and need to be filled.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 21, 2022

Jaycia Jacobs
Jeremiah Koester

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-294 Pistol Packing Educators: A Phenomenological Study on Educators Desire to Carry a Concealed Weapon in School

Dear Jaycia Jacobs, Jeremiah Koester,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) 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 the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2. (iii). 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:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46. 111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

Sincerely,

██████████████

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Reply
Reply all
Forward

Appendix B
Recruitment Letter

November 1, 2021

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am researching as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education (EdD) degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how educators view their lived experiences while concealing carrying a firearm in K-12 schools. Because mass school shootings have increased in the United States, I am interested in understanding what has precipitated educators' desire to conceal carry in K-12 schools and how vested they are in protecting students and the staff. Findings from this research could aid in helping address the safety plans and crises in schools. In addition, the outcomes from this study could add to the body of information addressing Crano's (1997) vested interest theory.

This study will address one central question and three research question: The central research question is as follow: What are the lived experiences of educators who desire and who are licensed to carry concealed weapons in school? Research Question 1: How does your desire to conceal carry a handgun at school empower your ability to defend yourself and others? What is the most significant issue you have with educators carrying concealed weapons in the school? Research Question 2: What specific experience(s) influenced educators' desires to conceal carry, and why do you believe educators should be allowed to conceal carry in a K-12 school, and how does that impact your feelings of safety? Research Question 3: How do educators describe their experiences in relation to the Second Amendment Rights?

1.   I utilized social media to target educators on various teacher and educator sites.
2.   All interviews will be scheduled based on participants availability.
3.   All interviews will be, face-to-face using a Zoom Link and audio and video recorded.

I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. Participants must be 18 years of age or older, be an educator, must work in a school or school district, must have a permit to carry, must be able to carry a concealed carry on the K-12 school campus, must work in a state that allows educators to conceal carry. Participants, if willing, will be asked if selected to participate in this study and will be asked to do the following activities:

19. Participants are asked to share the study's contact information with individuals they may know and who may fit the criteria.
20. Complete an online 10 question questionnaire for 10-15 minutes.
21. Participate in a 1:1 online interview via Zoom link for approximately 45-60 minutes.
22. Participate in a focus group via Zoom link for 45-60 minutes.
23. Review your interview transcript via email for 15-20 minutes

During these activities, you will be asked the following questions:

14. How long have you been an educator? In what capacity are you associated with your School or District?
15. What experiences have you had to motivate you to conceal carry a weapon?
16. What types of firearm training does the school offer? Explain the expectation of educators who are allowed to conceal carry in the school after the training?
17. How does the school inform educators of the firearm training? Can you explain is the requirement to complete the training?
18. How do you feel about other educators in your school or district carrying a firearm in school? Describe your feelings of safety knowing your colleagues carry a firearm in school?
19. How many school shootings have your school or district been involved in?
20. Have you been in a school shooting? Would you mind sharing that experience? Describe what safety in schools means to you today.
21. To what extent do you feel educators are responsible for the safety in school?
22. Would you please describe an incident in which you or a coworker experienced or needed to draw your firearm?
23. How prepared do you feel?
24. In the event of a school shooting, how likely do you believe you would defend yourself or others?

All activities and questions are optional: you may skip any part of this study that you do not wish to complete and may stop at any time. Please let me know if you need to perform the activities above in a different way than I have specified, and I would do my best to accommodate you. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here (https://s. surveyplanet. com/zsken2u6) please complete the attached survey. If you have any question, contact me at my email address for more information.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey which is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me by email before the interview. After you have read the consent form, please click to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Jaycia Jacobs
Doctoral Student

Appendix C

Participant Screening Survey

In order to participate, please complete the Participant Survey Screen that I would email to determine your eligibility. The survey will automatically be sent back to me for review. If you are selected to participate, you will be contacted by email to schedule your interview. Attached to the email will be an interview consent form. The consent form will contain more detailed information about my study. The consent form will need to be signed and returned to me by the start of the interview.

The survey includes the following questions:

1. Must be 18 years of age.

2. Must be an educator.

3. Must work in a school or school district.

4. Must be able to carry a concealed carry on K-12 school campus.

5 Must be in a state that allows educators to conceal carry.

I hope to include 10-20 participants
1.   10-20 participants in my interviews
2.   10-20 participants to complete the questionnaire an
3.   2 groups of 5 for the focus group.

If you have any questions about this request to participate in my research study, please contact me at ███████████████ or call me at ████████ .

Please click to take the survey

(https://s. surveyplanet. com/zsken2u6)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jaycia Jacobs

Appendix D

Participant Follow-Up Emails

Select Email (will be sent via email)

Date

Dear (Stakeholder's Name):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

Attached to this Email is a consent form. Please fill out the form and email the form back to me at ██████████████   prior to the interview or bring the completed form to the interview.

Please let me know your availability by (date) for an in-person interview on the following dates:

(List of dates and times)

I look forward to the opportunity to interview you for my study. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jaycia Jacobs
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Non-Select Email (will be sent via email)

Date

Dear (Stakeholder's Name):

Thank you for your interest in my research study. Unfortunately, you did not meet the criteria for participation based on the following reason: (List reason, e. g., educator less than five years)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jaycia Jacobs
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Appendix E

Consent Form

Title of the Project: Pistol Packing Educators: A Phenomenological Study on Educators Desire to Carry a Concealed Weapon in School.

Principal Investigator: Jaycia Jacobs, Liberty University, School of Education

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. All participants must meet the prescreening criteria, which consist of being an:

1. Must be 18 years of age.

2. Must be an educator.

3. Must work in a school or school district.

4. Must be able to carry a concealed carry on K-12 school campus.

5 Must be in a state that allows educators to conceal carry.

I hope to include 10-20 participants
4.   10-20 participants in my interviews
5.   10-20 participants to complete the questionnaire an
6.   2 groups of 5 for the focus group.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?
The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of educators who desire to conceal carrying a weapon in the K-12 school.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

- Participants are asked to share the study's contact information with individuals they may know and who may fit the criteria.
- Complete an online 10 question questionnaire for 10-15 minutes.
- Participate in a 1:1 online interview via Zoom link for approximately 45-60 minutes.

- Participate in a focus group via Zoom link for 45-60 minutes.
- Review your interview transcript via email for 15-20 minutes

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. The education field could benefit from the results of this study by adding to the body of research, which could add a greater understanding of why educators desire to carry a firearm in K-12 schools.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The details of this report will be kept in private. The publications will not contain any details that would make it possible to expose a subject. Research documentation and reports will be safely secured, and the researcher will retain access to the data. Data gathered from participants may be shared for use in further research studies or with other researchers. If the data collected from you is shared, all data that might identify you will be eliminated before any data is shared.

1. Participant comments will be kept secure by utilizing pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted by using Google or Zoom Link.

2. Data may be maintained on a password-locked device and can be used for upcoming presentations. Within three years, all online records will be deleted.

3. The interviews will be transcribed and registered. All documented records are kept on a secured computer with a password for three years and then deleted. The researcher will be the only one allowed to view these documents.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

The benefits of participating in this study will include making the attitudes of educators known, so state legislatures, school administrators, and police officials will be able to address school shootings and safety protocols further. Understanding the educators' desires could aim to improve school safety in K-12 schools.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in the research study is strictly voluntary. Your choice to participate in this study does not impact your present or potential affiliation with Liberty University. If you agree to participate, you can refuse to answer at any time and withdraw from the study at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

Please notify the researcher at the email address/phone number mentioned in the next section if you wish to withdraw from the research study. If you decide to withdraw, the data collected you shared will be immediately destroyed and not included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jaycia Jacobs. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at ███████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jeremy Koester, ██████████. edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd. , Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty. edu

Your Consent

By agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

 The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name
_____

Appendix F

Interview Questions

1.   Where did you grow up?

2.   What was your first introduction to a firearm?

3.   Please explain the role that firearms play in your family's life, particularly for those who conceal carry.

4.   Please explain your background on what led you to carry a firearm.

5.   Please describe what experiences you have had with a firearm?

6.   Please describe what prompted you to enroll in a firearms training course?

7.   Please explain why you became an educator and your intentions on making it a career.

8.   What roles do you hold as an educator? Please describe your responsibilities.

9.   What do you believe is your responsibility in keeping students and staff safe?

10.   What level of training should an educator receive if allowed to conceal a firearm as a safety measure in school?

11.   What are your views on educators carrying a concealed firearm, and will/or will it not make the school safer?

12.   How do you describe your sense of safety in the school setting without a firearm?

13.   How do you believe your sense of safety in the school setting would be if you were allowed to carry a firearm?

14.   What is your most significant concern of educators bringing a firearm to school?

15.   What is your personal views on who guns protect?

16.   What is your personal view on the Second Amendment, which protects the right to possess firearms?

17.   Please expand on your own belief that carrying a firearm may give individuals the illusion of authority.

18.   Please elaborate on your thought on educators carrying firearms at school in terms of safety.

Appendix G

Focus Group Questions

How long have you been an educator?

1. How long have you carried a firearm in school? In what capacity are you associated with your school or district?

2. What types of training did the school offer? How much time was required to complete the training?

3. How did the school provide educators with firearm training? How often is training classes offered?

4. How has the training help to prepare you for an active shooter?

5. How do you feel about other educators carrying a firearm in school? Describe your feelings of safety knowing your colleagues carry a firearm in school?

6. Have you ever been in a school shooting? Please share that experience?

7. To what extent do you believe district educators are concerned about safety?

8. What is your perception of guns in school?

9. What are your perceptions of educators bringing a gun to school for safety if they are allowed?

10. What can educators do to ensure parents and the community feel more secure about school safety?

11. What is your perception concerning safety as a licensed educator gun owner when you hear a school mass shooting had occurred?

12. How has your school district prepared you as an educator to respond to an active shooter emergency? Please describe.

Appendix H

Semi Structured Interview Questions

1. How long have you been an educator? In what capacity are you associated with your School or District?

2. What experiences have you had to motivate you to conceal carry a weapon?

3. What types of firearm training does the school offer? Explain the expectation of educators who are allowed to conceal carry in the school after the training?

4. How does the school inform educators of the firearm training? Can you explain is the requirement to complete the training?

5. How do you feel about other educators in your school or district carrying a firearm in school? Describe your feelings of safety knowing your colleagues carry a firearm in school?

6. How many school shootings have your school or district been involved in?

Have you been in a school shooting? Would you mind sharing that experience? Describe what safety in schools means to you today.

7. To what extent do you feel educators are responsible for the safety in school?

8. Would you please describe an incident in which you or a coworker experienced or needed to draw your firearm?

9. How prepared do you feel?

10. In the event of a school shooting, how likely do you believe you would defend yourself or others?