UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTANCE IN K-5 PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. The theory that guided this study is Brehm's psychological reactance theory, as it relates to educators' infringement of freedoms through educational policies. This study utilized 10 participants. Criteria for participation included educators with a minimum of three years of teaching experience who have encountered some degree of frustration and were chosen from the researcher's personal contacts. The setting for this research was a school district in western Pennsylvania. Three forms of data were collected including a survey, individual interviews, and a focus group. The researcher sought to understand teacher perceptions of recent policies, the effects of policy implementation on teacher well-being, and the effect of policy implementation on psychological reactance. The researcher discovered three major themes that offer an understanding of K-5 educators' experiences implementing policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. Themes include policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and educator compliance. Sub-themes were identified for each of the themes and emerged during data analysis. These sub-themes include excessive workload, autocratic leadership, and policy oversight. My interpretation of these findings revealed that educators may not be as frustrated with policies they are required to implement as much as they may be frustrated with the procedures necessary for implementation. The results of this study revealed educators have a desire for educational policies to be beneficial to students while being practical to educators. In addition, educators

have a desire for their professional judgment and expertise to be utilized throughout policy creation and implementation.

Keywords: psychological reactance, educational policies, policy implementation, Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior. Without His divine intervention, this would have never been possible. I would also like to dedicate this to my husband, Keith who was patient with me through the coursework and dissertation process. To my children, Morgan, Mason, Autumn, and Addison, it is my prayer that you saw God work through me and that you never lose your desire to learn and pursue all that God has for you. Finally, to my late father, George. Daddy, there were a lot of nights that I was too busy. I took your time with us for granted. I pray that I have made you proud!

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First and foremost, my deepest gratitude to my Lord and Savior who provided all my needs to complete this dissertation and the coursework for my program.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1

I would like to thank, Dr. Andrea Bruce, my committee chair, for her guidance and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Pannone, my second reader, for her feedback and positive encouragement.

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List of Abbreviations

National Defense Education Act (NDEA)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Race-To-The-Top (RTTP)

Common Core Standards (CCS)

Data Driven Instruction (DDI)

Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR)

Every Child Succeeds Acts (ESSA)

School Improvement Grant Program (SIG)

State Boards of Education (SBOE)

Chief State School Officers (CSSO)

State Education Agencies (SEA)

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

The United States Department of Education (USDE)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (eCFR)

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)

National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)

Career Resilience (CR)

The Hong Psychological Reactance Scale (HPRS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I sought to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to enforce such policies (Shieh, 2021). Chapter One provides a background, including the historical, social, and theoretical contexts for this study's research. Also included in Chapter One are the problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, research questions, and definitions.

Background

Portraying the lived experiences of K-5 educators is essential to gain the perspective of K-5 educators required to implement policies in which they have no buy-in (Shieh, 2021). Hinnant-Crawford (2016) found that educators believe their voices do not matter in improving education outside of their classroom. These researchers suggests that educators may not accept a policy founded on principles contrary to their own and may not implement practices that are not parallel to their rationalities (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2016). Ball (2015) suggested that refusal to implement policies is a form of resistance, and resistance is a form of psychological reactance. As Brehm (1966) described, psychological reactance is an emotional state people encounter when they feel outside influences and incongruous rules threaten their freedom. This section presents educational policies' historical background, including teacher engagement in policy creation. The social context describes persons affected by educational policies and the reason behind empowering educators in policy conception. Finally, a brief overview of Brehm's psychological reactance theory was connected to educational policy.

Historical Context

Historically, education policies have been created and implemented to educate society. Education in America began with the Puritans and focused on teaching reading and writing, providing citizens with the ability to read and understand the Bible (Kober & Stark Rentner, 2020). In addition, education is essential to prepare individuals to live in a democratic society Laws passed in 1785 and 1787 established federal "land grants," which ordered states to set aside a portion of land to build public schools. These laws supported the idea that placed education in the hands of the federal government, using legislation to bring forth regulations. Hinnant-Crawford (2016) stated that since the inception of public education in the United States, the expertise of educators had been ignored when creating and implementing education policies. In 1880, Mary Abigail Dodge argued that educators should be able to operate the school just as doctors operate a hospital. Mary Abigail Dodge was an American writer who began her career as a teacher in the same school she attended, Ipswich Female Seminary. While her teaching career was successful, she did not enjoy the long hours and low pay which accompanied her success. Dodge left teaching and began her writing career under the pseudonym Gail Hamilton (Chadwick, 1997). In 1871, Dodge started living throughout the winter months with her cousin, who was married to Speaker of the House, James G. Blaine, giving her a front-row seat to policy creation (History's Women, 1999). Educators historically have not been seen as a respected resource in educational policy development. Instead, legislators think their knowledge and beliefs need to be managed by policies and reforms (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Olson, 2002; van Veen & Sleegers, 2006).

Social Context

The problem of K-5 educators being required to implement top-down decisions from policymakers and stakeholders who do not have the task of implementation, therefore, leaving

educators to execute a policy for which they have no consideration, gives rise to several social aspects (Shieh, 2021). The Framework for Responsiveness and Resilience in Education Policy, established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, filtrates from a societal level down to the learner level. The main thought of this policy is to provide the tools necessary for students, educators, and administration to promote resilience at each level during times of uncertainty (Schleicher, 2019). Vasquez-Martinez et al. (2013) stated that education reforms are complex and controversial due to their effects on our society.

In the United States, constituting educational policy has been devised to prohibit or diminish a teacher's ability to add value to legislation (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Educational policies, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB), are giving rise to a reduction in viewing educators as professionals because there has been a shift from equity in education to accountability in education. Additionally, policies enacted to increase student achievement and teach accountability have been found to negatively affect educators' identity, commitment to teaching, and the way they envision their careers (Troman et al., 2007). The Education Commission of States, which tracks state education policies, reports that as of March 2022, there have been 2,600 pending education policies, of which 170 are related to employment issues, and 157 are related to teacher recruitment and retention (Wilkins, 2022). Everitt (2020) argued that legislators assume their policies will be an asset to students, educators, and the community; furthermore, this presumptuousness leads to complications. Legislation and policies have far-reaching social implications that affect today's students, educators, and communities and may also affect our societal future.

Theoretical Context

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies (Shieh, 2021). Seminal research has contributed by providing information about some of the effects policy implementation has on teacher well-being. Educators are the managers of instruction in the classroom but do not have control over decisions made by the administration (Lee et al., 1991; Paino, 2017; Renuzulli et al., 2011). Stapleton (2018) indicated an ongoing discussion explaining that educators are concerned about their lack of voice, privilege, and independence.

A prominent researcher in educational reform in the United Kingdom, Stephen Ball, has made significant contributions to education policy (Hostins, 2019). Ball, Maguire, and Braun developed what is referred to as the Theory of Policy Enactment, which is based on a survey completed in England that considers policy enactment through the interpretation and translation of policies. Ball believes policies should be based on theory-based educational research. Ball's research suggests that policy enactment is based on the perspective of subjectivity and that subjectivity produces resistance (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Ball defines subjectivity through the lens of Michel Foucault, who provides two definitions. Subjectivity can include an individual under the authority of another person, or it could be the self-configuration of identity, also referred to as one's conscience. Perryman et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative case study of policy enactment in secondary schools through Ball's Theory of Policy Enactment. They concluded that educators could become reflective professionals, managed by themselves yet subtlety dominated by the government.

Hinnant-Crawford (2016) conducted mixed-method research using the social cognitive theory to learn how educators perceive themselves as policy operatives. Wilcox and Lawson

(2017) used the social theory to determine a teacher's ability to adapt their performance in implementing policy. Social theory is a broad term that uses methodical frameworks to study social phenomena. The social cognitive theory is one of many theoretical frameworks under the social theory umbrella. Both studies conclude that for policy implementation to occur through policy operatives, with more success and less resistance, educators need to have a voice in policy creation and have opportunities for collaboration and learning while receiving positive feedback (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Wilcox & Lawson, 2017).

My research is grounded in Brehm's Psychological Reactance Theory; an emotional state people encounter when they feel their freedom has been threatened by outside influences and incongruous rules (Brehm, 1966). Pishghadam et al. (2022) and Trinidad (2019) utilized the psychological reactance theory as the theoretical framework for their research. Pishghadam conducted a study focusing on the connection between teacher burnout, psychological reactance, and the role of spiritual intelligence in educators teaching English as a Foreign Language. Trinidad proposed a parallel between educators' response to bureaucratic control and individuals' response to a loss of freedoms. Conclusions drawn from Pishghadam indicate that the reactance theory is a novel concept in academics, stating that psychological reactance can look different between individuals, and there is no possible method to understand how an individual will react when their freedoms are at stake. Pishghadam and Trinidad both conclude that it is essential for educators to be sensitive to their responses and the process taking place when responding. With this thought in mind, the reactance theory was used to examine K-5 educators' reactions to policies and mandates handed down to them in recent years. Using the psychological reactance theory in my study provided an understanding of how the theory applies to educators given current circumstances in schools and extends the reactance theory to include present-day

situations where Americans' freedoms have been threatened and, in some cases, taken away (Schmidt et al., n.d.).

Problem Statement

The problem is that K-5 educators are required to implement top-down decisions from policymakers and stakeholders who do not participate in policy implementation in the classroom; therefore, educators are left to implement a policy they are not involved in creating (Shieh, 2021). Educational stakeholders may include individuals or groups interested in public school success (Stosich & Bae, 2018). In recent years, many American educators have experienced psychological reactance due to government agencies implementing mandates that some say have trampled on their liberties and freedoms. The execution of such policies has disconcerted the K-5 public educational system, and educators have had to bear the brunt (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 2020).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. Research has provided information on the effects of policy implementation on educators' well-being (Farley & Chamberlain, 2021). However, research concerning teacher psychological reactance, particularly concerning policies and mandates enacted and handed down in recent years, is limited. Brehm's psychological reactance theory, developed in 1966, guided this study (Brehm, 1966). Referring to Brehm's theory provided an opportunity to understand how the theory applies to educators given current circumstances in

schools and extends the reactance theory to include present-day situations where Americans' freedoms have been threatened or taken away.

Significance of the Study

This study expands on Brehm's (1966) psychological reactance theory as it relates to educators' infringement of freedoms through educational policies. Brehm's theory of psychological reactance has been widely studied and applied in fields such as medicine, marketing, psychology, and tourism (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Amini et al. (2019) stated that psychological reactance is important in social and educational communications; however, there is limited data on the theory concerning education, particularly among K-5 educators. Researching K-5 educators' psychological reactance provided a perspective that may empower educators to become more involved in educational policy creation. Amini suggests that because psychological reactance is a new research niche, there are many variables and settings where research is needed to extend the psychological reactance theory.

Several researchers have speculated a need for research to understand the creation of educational policy ideas, including those coming out of federal and state government (Galey-Horn et al., 2019; Shieh, 2021). Paino (2017) and Schulte (2018) identified discrepancies between policy creation and implementation at the classroom level. Jones et al. (2017) acknowledged that legislators lack a working knowledge of the day-to-day functions at the classroom level and added that top-down policymakers desire to stay in power, enacting policies designed to control entities. Shieh (2021) found that educators described a sense of helplessness and powerlessness concerning participation in policymaking. Maguire et al. (2018) and Trinidad (2018) implied that educational policies have consequences, including teacher responses and

resistance. This study adds to the empirical literature by understanding educators' lived experiences as they implement educational policy and the effects of psychological reactance.

Hinnant-Crawford (2016) declared that in the United States, legislators and other educational stakeholders do not take notice of the expertise educators can bring to the table when deciding and implementing policies for education. This study provides practical significance for educators, administrators, legislators, and other educational stakeholders, raising awareness of how educators perceive the educational policies they are required to implement while calling attention to their unique perspectives on the needs of the students and communities they serve. In confabulation with their local school district, educators must be emboldened to become their mapmakers, participating in ongoing professional development on curriculum improvement, and sharing in the decision-making processes that impact students, parents, and community members (Knoester & Parkison, 2017).

Research Questions

This study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators as they are required to implement policies handed down to them from legislators and other stakeholders in which they are not involved in creating to describe their experiences, perceptions about recent policies, the perceived impact their experiences have had on their well-being, and the effects this has on psychological reactance. Qualitative research questions should be unrestricted and developing, providing an avenue to inquire about a phenomenon and address all population factors (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Peoples, 2020). Therefore, as a researcher, I developed a central research question in phenomenology that explores a lived experience (Peoples, 2020). In addition, I used subquestions to investigate specific areas of the phenomenon that may aid in

capturing the essence of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The following research questions guided this study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders?

Federal, state, and local government agencies continue to introduce and pass legislation that directly impacts public school educators (Wilkins, 2022). In education, there is a disconnect between policymakers and those required to execute policy (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). This disconnection occurs for several reasons, including research quality that backs policies, policy relevancy, and classroom complexity (Berliner, 2008). Educators have historically been alienated from educational policymaking. Policies impact all K-5 educators across Pennsylvania, providing an outlet to study K-5 educators lived experiences as they execute policies.

Sub-Question One

What are K-5 educators' perceptions about recent policies they have been required to implement?

States across America introduced or passed 816 policies in 2020, and in 2021, they introduced or passed 2,732 policies concerning education (Wilkins, 2022). Limited research is available to determine educators' perceptions of policies and mandates in education, particularly those enacted within the past two years. Understanding educators' perceptions of educational policies can fundamentally change policy creation, but only if policymakers are interested in teacher perspectives.

Sub-Question Two

How do K-5 educators describe the influence that implementing policy has on their well-being?

Individuals' physical and mental well-being depends on how well they can manage their environment's psychosocial, physical, and contextual stressors (Mota et al., 2021). Gordon (1989) explained that the concept of relative autonomy within the school system is one in which policymakers are viewed as capitalists and where educators and students are left to utilize their limited autonomy to impede and modify policy. Researchers have argued that decreased autonomy is intimately linked to increased on-the-job stress and decreased professionalism (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Trinidad, 2018).

Sub-Question Three

How do K-5 educators describe the influence of psychological reactance when obligated to implement policies beyond their control?

Reactance is a negative response when individuals experience a threat or loss of their freedoms and can become the stimulus to reestablish them (Steindl et al., 2015). Motivations to reestablish one's freedom coincide with personal beliefs and their constitution. Reactance carries behavioral, emotional, and cognitive effects that educators are not immune to. There is limited research on teacher psychological reactance, particularly in educational policy enactment. Describing this effect may help narrow the research gap.

Definitions

1. *Policy* - Policies are an agenda or an officially agreed-upon set of ideas produced by a group of people that should be followed in specific situations (Lewis et al., 2019).

2. *Psychological Reactance* - Psychological reactance is an emotional state that a person encounters when they feel their freedom has been threatened by outside influences and incongruous rules (Brehm, 1966).

Summary

Chapter One specified the background, historical, social, and theoretical contexts of this hermeneutic phenomenological study of the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates. This study focused on the problem of K-5 educators being required to implement top-down decisions from policymakers and stakeholders who do not have to do the dirty work of implementation; therefore, educators are left to implement a policy without validation (Shieh, 2021). Brehm's Psychological Reactance Theory is a disposition individuals come upon when they feel their freedoms are endangered by outside influences and illogical rules (Brehm, 1966). Psychological reactance is a new focus, and further research is needed to extend the theory, with education being an area of interest (Amini et al., 2019). The outcomes of this study assist in filling in the literature gap concerning the understanding of educators' lived experiences implementing educational policies without validation that legislators and other stakeholders have transmitted. In addition, this study raises awareness of how educators perceive the educational policies they must implement while calling attention to their unique perspective on the needs of the students and communities they serve.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

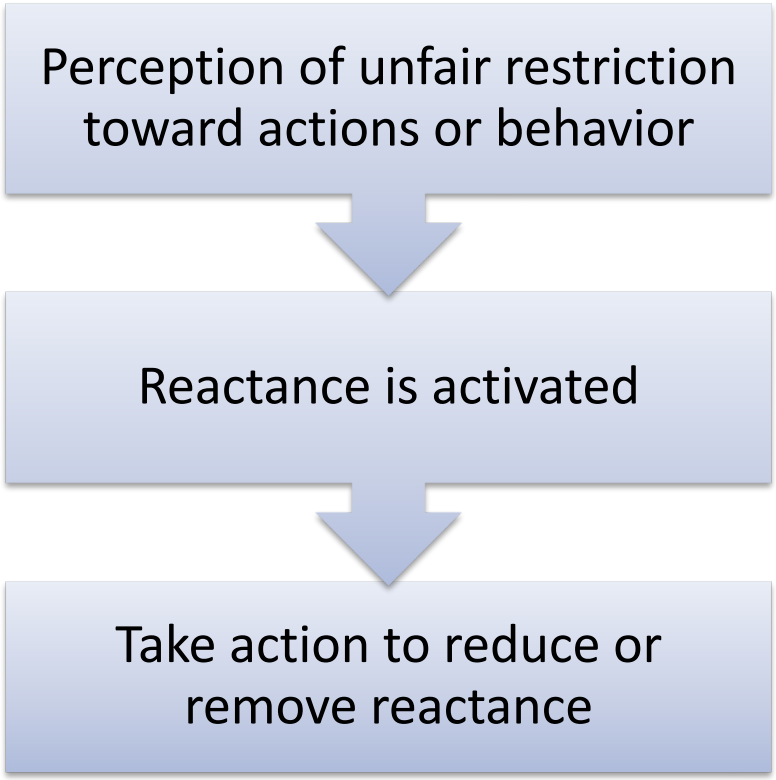
The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. Previous research has returned essential information about some of the effects policy implementation has on educators' well-being. However, there is limited research concerning teacher psychological reactance, particularly concerning policies and mandates that have been enacted and handed down in recent years. Chapter Two includes a review of concepts associated with Brehm's (1966) psychological reactance theory, as well as defining educational policy, the origination of educational policy including ideation, policymakers, the implementation of policy, and drawbacks associated with policy implementation. Chapter Two ends with educators' responses to educational policies, the negative and positive effects policies may have, and teacher involvement in policymaking.

Theoretical Framework

Jack Brehm was an American Psychologist who, in 1966, published an article in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* on reactance theory (Society for Personality and Social Psychology, n.d.). Brehm (1966) defined psychological reactance theory as an emotional state that a person encounters when they feel outside influences and incongruous rules have threatened their freedom. Every individual has probably experienced reactance at some point in their life. Reactance is a conscious or subconscious distasteful provocation that surfaces when a person is told what to do and is a motivator to restore freedom (Smerek, 2017; Steindl, 2015). Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the process of reactance.

Figure 1

Process of Reactance



Note: Adopted from Butterfield-Booth (1996).

Brehm (2013) postulates that in an authoritarian social relationship setting, the psychological reactance theory is abundantly relevant and threatens to control or remove a person's freedom and can have significant consequences, which could either be beneficial or harmful. In the early stages of Brehm's reactance theory, many research projects were undertaken to study various aspects of the theory. In 1978, a quantitative study was conducted of 125 college students randomly assigned one relative power level in a relationship that included no power, low power, equal power, high power, and absolute power (Tjosvold & Sagaria, 1978). Researchers in this study hypostasized that control-minded school administrators may provoke teacher reactance (Brehm, 2013; Tjosvold & Sagaria, 1978). The results of Tjosvold and

Sagaria's study supported their hypothesis that individuals given absolute power were not concerned with the perspective of others with less power. In addition, a correlational study was conducted in 1978 by Mowday to determine what method of motivational influence principals may utilize that would be most effective while resulting in a lower risk of reactance in educators (Brehm, 2013; Mowday, 1978). Results of Mowday's research revealed that principals who used manipulation, a form of covert power, had greater influential success with less risk of developing reactance.

The reactance theory has four main principles. First, freedom is an expectation that is controlled by certainty. Second, the importance of freedom is interactive and is based on the degree of value placed on the endangered freedom (Brehm, 2013). Third, the degree of reactance is influenced by the number of freedoms endangered. Finally, the degree of reactance may be increased when an implied threat to freedom occurs. These principles were used as a lens to examine K-5 educators' reactions to many policies and mandates that have been handed down to them in recent years. While there is limited literature in education centered around psychological reactance, researchers have utilized psychological reactance theory and the theoretical framework for research in other social settings (Pishghadam et al., 2022; Trinidad, 2019). Pishghadam et al. (2022) carried out research focusing on the connection between teacher burnout, psychological reactance, and the role of spiritual intelligence in educators who teach English as a Foreign Language. Trinidad (2019) suggested a parallel between educators' response to bureaucratic control and individuals' response to the loss of freedoms. Conclusions drawn from Pishghadam reveal that the reactance theory is a novel concept in academics needing further research. Psychological reactance can be viewed differently between individuals, and there is no clear understanding of how individuals will react when their freedoms are at risk.

Pishghadam and Trinidad both conclude that it is important for educators to be sensitive to their responses and the process taking place when responding. With this thought in mind, the reactance theory was used as a lens to examine K-5 educators' reactions to policies and mandates that have been handed down to them in recent years. Using the psychological reactance theory in this study afforded the opportunity to understand how the theory applies to educators given current circumstances in schools and extends the reactance theory to include present-day situations where educators' perceived freedoms have been threatened. In addition, the psychological reactance theory guided my research and was used to analyze the results and interpret collected data.

Related Literature

The literature surrounding the experiences of educators' psychological reactance about the implementation of policies in which they have no control is lacking. Brehm's theory has substantial implications as educators continue to receive policies and mandates; they are required to implement them without buy-in. There is an abundance of literature surrounding federal policies that have been enacted through various presidential administrations (Wright, 2022). However, literature about state and local policies contains deficient information about teacher reactance. In addition, current literature indicates that educators are not considered key players in policy ideation and are not given many opportunities to voice their concerns (Stapleton, 2018). A teacher's psychological reactance may cause teacher attrition which may induce psychological reactance and potentially harm their well-being (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Current literature also contains limited information on the lived experiences of K-5 educators in the most recent time frame who were given policies and mandates to implement. The following sections contain

information about research related to educational policy and the way in which educators interact with its implementation.

Policies Defined

Policies are an agenda, or an officially agreed-upon set of ideas produced by a group of people, usually politicians, that they wish to be followed in specific situations (Lewis et al., 2019). A policy may not be a specific directive and only provide options for reaching a goal or resolution (Braun & Maguire, 2018; Flew & Ball, 1995). Ball (2021) described policy as a written or spoken, unstable, ever-changing, synergic process. A policy may also be referred to as a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, reform, or legislation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Government policies encapsulate public education, highways, public safety, and welfare spending. Policies can involve local governance, state governance, or federal governance. Even in a free country, such as the United States of America, policies, and laws exist in almost every facet of people's lives.

Policy Ideation

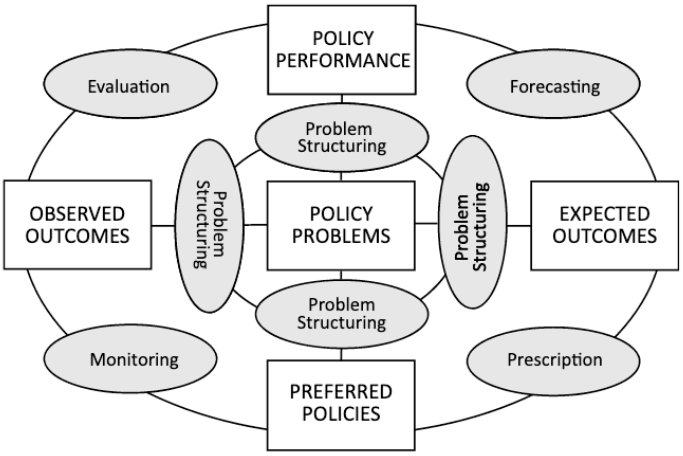
Current educational policies use research that studies the effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures using a random sample design with the anticipation of providing generalization (Penuel, 2016). Educational policies originate in the minds of lawmakers for a vast number of reasons. Many educational policies are enacted based on evidence-based research, while others are formed through the more traditional approach known as policy without humanity (Carusi et al., 2017; Young, 1999). Policy without humanity states that policies are formulated based on identifying problems that need to be resolved, and implementation is directed toward solving a said problem (Carusi et al., 2017; Levinson et al., 2009). Legitimacy, relevancy, and origination of evidence are of concern when being used to formulate legislation

and may be more complex, drawing further complications to the policy (Carusi et al., 2017). Other policies may be created on the basis of litigation, such as Brown versus The Board of Education in 1954 or Lau versus Nicolas in 1974, while others may be created based on social activism, such as Critical Race Theory, or federal level reports, such as house and senate reports (Sampson, 2018). Education policies are often formulated for political purposes rather than founded on evidence, logic, or ethics (Arar et at., 2019). Arar alleged that many government officials introduce educational policies to advance a political agenda or maintain an ideology or social system. For this reason, policies need to be created by specific groups of people, practices, and places (Lewis et al., 2019). In education, policies are formed by all three areas of government (Xq, 2022). Socialists, or persons who advocate for government control, believe education systems are large political bureaucracies (Bidwell, 1965; Meyer & Rowan, 1978) because these systems have definitive rules and controls. Today the word “bureaucracy” possesses a largely negative connotation brought on by the German socialist Max Webber, who used bureaucracy to describe a type of organizational structure (Balikci, 2018). However, the word bureaucracy originated from the French word "bureau," which meant a table or office. Often there is a limited period when many legislators have an opportunity to make changes to policy, known as the policy window. An example is the crossover of a new presidential administration or the reaffirmation of key legislation (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). It is worth mentioning that other network actors, such as businesses, entrepreneurial philanthropists, and policy institutes, are increasingly becoming invested in public education policy and may have an advantage over other policy actors, including families, students, and educators engaging in policy ideation and analysis (Ellison et al., 2018).

Policy analysis or evaluation is an associative method of investigation with the desired outcome to create, assess, and communicate policy-relevant information (Cairney, 2019; Howlett et al., 2020; Jann & Wegrich, 2007). Policy-relevant information is aimed at providing answers to policy problems, expected policy outcomes, preferred policies, observed policy outcomes, and policy performance (Madani, 2019). Policy analysis is just the beginning of the creation of public policy, which is assembled in stages (Fischer et al., 2006). The formation and implementation of a policy should be prepared as separate, sequential stages beginning with formation followed by the implementation (Carusi et al., 2017). Lewis et al. (2019) described the process as multifaceted, poised with complicated cycles in which policies are assembled, disassembled, disrupted, then reassembled, making the phases of policymaking intertwined, creating a set of forward and backward loops with no definitive beginning or end. Dunn (1994) reported that U.S. public policy creation consists of five distinct yet interrelated segments with an apparent organizational order and has addressed eight phases. Other theorists have developed similar models (Dunn, 2017; Ellison et al., 2018), including Brewer and deLeon (1983), May and Wildavaky (1978), Anderson (1975), and Jenkins (1978) (Fischer & Miller, 2017). The eight phases outlined by Dunn included agenda setting, policy formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy assessment, policy adaptation, policy succession, and policy termination (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Graphical Representation of Policy Analysis



Note: Multidisciplinary policy analysis (Dunn, 2017).

In the agenda-setting stage, special interest groups and appointed or elected officials provide government entities with problems that may or may not be placed on an agenda. Policymakers see this stage as a means to control what issues obtain government attentiveness and possible action (Bali & Halpin, 2021). Once on the agenda, different policies are created to tackle the problem and adopted by the legislative majority or a court decision. An example is the recent supreme court decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade, where the Supreme court placed the power back to the states to determine how they will govern abortion (Regional Health–Americas, 2022). Implementing policy is done by organizational entities, such as local school boards and district administration, using various resources to put action to policy. Once a policy is implemented, an assessment is needed to determine its effectiveness. Assessment may lead to modifications, succession, or termination of a policy. A recent example of policy modifications and successions occurred when states placed mandates on schools in response to Covid-19. These mandates included closing schools, social distancing, and wearing face masks (Gonzalez-

Eiras & Niepelt, 2022). Between March 2020 and March 2022, mandates in schools that were put in place for Covid-19 began to change, and many of these changes began taking place as a result of the psychological reactance of parents across the country.

Policy Implementation

Policy implementation is the instruments, resources, and interactions that connect policy to action (Seraw & Xinihi, 2020). Policy implementation is an undertaking that is complex and requires weaving around obstructions. These obstructions can come from political, analytic aptitude, and operational capacity. Many approaches may be utilized when implementing policy. These include a top-down, bottom-up, policy action relationship, inter-organizational interaction, or the rational choice model (Jones et al., 2017; Seraw & Xinihi, 2020). Top-down has also been referred to as forward mapping, where objectives from high-level policymakers are filtered down to the lowest level, implementors also referred to in the literature as street-level bureaucrats (Cohen & Aviram, 2021; Seraw & Xinihi, 2020). Street-level bureaucrats are the front-line workers implementing policies, such as educators, nurses, or social workers (Cohen & Aviram, 2021). The top-down approach has been the preferred method in implementing educational policies. However, this method does not account for political properties and assumes that policymakers can regulate implementation. It can be argued that legislators who uphold a top-down approach to policy making and distribution desire control over a policies' objects, and in education, these objects are often the educators. A bottom-up approach would encourage teacher input throughout policy creation (Jones et al., 2017). However, this approach is seldom applied. While educators are needed to implement government policies and legislation, they are often left out of the policy process (Shieh, 2021b). Good et al. (2017) argued that education policies written and implemented are more effective when educators are included in the policy design

process. This argument is based on compelling research founded on the influence of institutional standards in which the work of educators is obtained using data from qualitative case studies. Educators interviewed in West Virginia and Wisconsin describe institutional norms as a form of control in schools. A lack of time, assumptions about the teaching profession, and seclusion are constraints affecting educators' participation in policy creation. Educators need to be able to challenge institutional standards and routines in order to engage as active policy negotiators, particularly in structures that support the ability to collaborate outside of the control in their schools, which could build competence and allow educators to be counted as professionals who have the expertise needed in policy design.

There is a plethora of research indicating teacher interpretations of reform policies have a direct effect on policy implementation, therefore making their interpretation a critical component (Bertrand & March, 2015; Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2016; Cho & Wayman, 2014; Coburn, 2001; Hill, 2001; Louis et al., 2005; Spillane et al., 2002). Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer (2016) asserted that teacher interpretation of the policy is grounded in institutional logic, particularly market accountability, professional, bureaucratic, and communal sentiment logic. This group of researchers continues by claiming these logics relate directly to an educators' school and community. Institutional logic is said to establish cultural fundamentals, including values, beliefs, and normative expectations that provide meaning to the daily activities of individuals or organizations and how they organize those activities in time and space (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2016; Thorton & Ocasia, 1999). Cohen et al. (2020) and Fixsen et al. (2015) stated that evidence-based research shows that policies that seem to be designed well succeed in small pilot implementation but bring letdowns when implemented on a larger scale. In order to successfully implement policies on a larger scale across different districts and schools that possess individual

characteristics, one must understand the human aspects of implementation, not just the technical aspects (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). In other words, policymakers must remember that educators are the key actors in policy implementation and must demonstrate a working knowledge of all facets of the proposed policy (Pizmony-Levy & Woolsey, 2017).

Policy in education tends to dictate how society views education as a whole in addition to students, educators, learning, and school administration (Gillborn, 2005; Good et al., 2017; Lipman, 2011; Stovall, 2009). Ball (2005) noted that policies in education are exercised, written interventions that, through parallel conversation, formulate absolutes regarding education. Ozga (2001) regarded the policy as being embedded in a hierarchical structure, initiated by government legislation or state and local bureaucracies that leave educators the objects of policy. The question remains, why has the federal government become involved in legislation encompassing education when the United States Constitution does not contain laws related to education (Knoester & Parkison, 2017)?

Federal Government

Policymakers reside in federal, state, and local government agencies and are voted into their positions by the people through an election process, or they may be assigned to a position by an elected official (Xq, 2022). The United States of America is a constitution-based system in which power is appropriated between federal and local governments. The U.S. Constitution was written as the "law of the land"; however, this document also seeks to limit the federal government's power (The Roles of State and Federal Governments | National Geographic Society, 2022). The 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, added in 1791, states that any powers not designated through the U.S. Constitution are to be appropriated by the individual states. The Federal Government's limited powers are known as "enumerated power" and include

the power to impose taxes, regulate commerce, create a uniform law of naturalization, institute federal courts to be subservient to the Supreme Court, establish and maintain a military, and declare war. Education in America is a federalized system that gives the local government power and authority over it (Ellison et al., 2018).

Education is not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, and most educational policies are determined by state and local governments (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). However, the federal government has enacted its share of educational policies, focusing on primary education. These include the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, and the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994 (African American Voices in Congress, n.d.). Laws such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), enacted in 2001, required states to formulate school standards and report student outcomes (Sampson, 2018). NCLB was also formulated to increase teacher accountability. Paino (2017) argued that when federal policy simultaneously produces increased accountability standards without the appropriate structure, as in the case of NCLB, it may increase organizational tension. NCLB has been criticized for its execution, funding, and mandates and is said to have confused school districts, principals, and educators (Mathis, 2003; Orlich, 2004; Paino, 2007; Weeden, 2005). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was enacted to create and save jobs and reform education. Included in the ARRA, the United States Department of Education (USDE) embedded criteria for using the $100 billion set aside for education. The criteria include funds to be spent quickly and thoughtfully with transparency, reporting, and accountability to advance school improvement and reform to establish and improve student academic outcomes (Okhremtchouk & Jimenez-Castellanos, 2018).

While earlier policies were motivated by ethical and moral ideas, later policies focused on student and teacher performance (ACT, n.d.; Kober & Stark Rentner, 2020). For example, Horace Mann, a Massachusetts legislator and secretary of the state board of education in the 1930s, began encouraging the "common school" that would provide moral instruction in addition to teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic (Kober & Stark Rentner, 2020). Vast research proposes that political logic about education reform often overshadows sound logic (Arar et al., 2019). Over the past 12 years, policymakers have shifted their focus toward teacher accountability (Galey-Horn et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2017). In the 2010s, The Obama administration passed an education policy, Race-To-The-Top (RTTP), calling for Common Core Standards (CCS), Data-Driven Instruction (DDI), and Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR). The RTTP policy was enacted to encourage improved teaching routines and methods that target K-12 education (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). CCS was written as a broad outline of skills students should achieve in each subject at their grade level (Gewertz, 2020). CCS was an attempt to level the educational playing field across the country (Knoester & Parkison, 2017). Implementing Obama's RTTT policy was reported to be particularly challenging because CCLS, DDI, and APPR were supposed to be implemented parallel to each other. However, from policy formation to classroom implementation, inconsistency between how states interpreted and implemented the policy emerged. In addition, the policy was modified as it made its way from district administration to classroom educators. State lawmakers often adjust policies to make them more specific to the day-to-day function of the classroom in their particular states (Xq, 2022).

The ESSA of 2015 was meant to tighten the grasp of federal and state governments on school systems (Schueler & West, 2021) by gaining more control and accountability of educators

through the usage of state testing scores as a portion of the annual assessment of teacher effectiveness (Penuel et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2017; Sampson, 2018). In addition, President Obama's administration focused on lower-performing schools by providing grants, known as the School Improvement Grant Program (SIG), which required schools partaking in the program to implement federally defined intervention programs. In the United States, politicians and lawmakers from both parties have supported teacher effectiveness legislation to increase teacher excellence (Galey-Horn et al., 2019; Wolbrecht & Hartney, 2014). Federal agencies such as the Department of Education may also evoke rules and regulations (Xq, 2022). They often underscore the use of research to guide programs and policies they wish to enact. All too often, legislators have little or no working knowledge of the daily operations inside the classroom, making it difficult for them to understand how their policies will be implemented and the impact they may have on educators and students (Jones et al., 2017). With policymakers looking for improved academic achievement in students through better-quality teacher performance and increased accountability, they assume their policies will yield these desired outcomes (Paino, 2017). The creation of federal education policies has been occurring more frequently, and although state government, local government, school district administration, and building principals play an important role in shaping school organizations, districts continue to be held accountable by federal policies (Paino, 2017; Sampson, 2018).

State Government

State school boards differ across the United States, making them difficult to study thoroughly (Young & Reynolds, 2018). For example, states may have state boards of education (SBOE), chief state school officers (CSSO), or state education agencies (SEA) (VanGronigen et al., 2022). Currently, in the United States, three states do not have a state board of education:

Minnesota, New Mexico, and Wisconsin (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2022; VanGronigen et al., 2022). State constitutions consider SBOEs as having the ability to create policy; however, many do not participate in policy creation and solely rely on their state legislators to make district decisions. The amount of power the SBOE has largely depended on the level of control and responsibility the board is granted (Young et al., 2018). Young studied the SBOEs of Florida, Virginia, and Texas and found that the SBOEs of these states did not depict their state demographics, and only the SBOEs of Texas and Virginia included members with educational experience. Many members in each state had deep ties to influential businesses or political circles, and some SBOEs have members appointed rather than elected, making them less accountable to their state's people and distancing them socially and economically (Gill, 2018; Young et al., 2021).

Young et al (2021) conducted exploratory research using an electronic accessibility index of SBOEs to determine the ability of the public to have a voice in educational policy creation and reform. Quantitative data was collected from SBOE websites using four categories broken down into 39 variables related to SBOE website accessibility to create the accessibility index. Out of 47 states, the index ranged from 18 to 39.5, with an average index score of 28.67. Pennsylvania scored next to the lowest (20) above Florida (18). Results from their study indicate that most SBOEs do not support public participation in SBOE practices. Several factors could determine the reason behind such low scores. Young speculated a lack of staffing and a decreased desire for transparency or engagement with the public. The American education system is greatly influenced by the government, policymakers, and other influential entities that may or may not act according to the will of the people.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education oversees education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Policymakers at the state level in Pennsylvania include the State Board of Education, which collaborates with the Department of Education (State Board of Education, n.d.). State codes and regulations regarding education are found in the Pennsylvania Code, Title 22, and the Public School Code of 1949 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, n.d.). Education Commission of the States disclosed that Pennsylvania introduced 11 education legislations from 2020 to 2021. Of the 11 bills introduced, eight bills were enacted, and three were vetoed (Wilkins, 2022). These policies range from charter schools to technology. SBOEs are understudied, and many questions about who they are, how they gained their position, what they do, and their impact on local school districts remain obscure (Young et al., 2020). The sole purpose of a democracy and government officials is to represent the will of the people by creating and implementing policies that the people request (Okhremtchouk & Jimenez-Castellanos, 2018). Collins (2021) purported that policymakers across the board incessantly usurp authority from school boards, and states are establishing systems without public approval, which has greatly affected the authority of urban school districts.

Local Government

Although school boards are at risk of losing their authority over their school districts, many local school boards are missing some fundamental democratic processes. Local school boards govern local school districts; they work with school superintendents, negotiate with local educators' unions, and make policies for school districts to follow (Okhremtchouk & Jimenez-Castellanos, 2018). They create and enact these policies in collaboration with the school district's superintendent and must adhere to Federal and State Education regulations. Trujillo (2012) completed a case study on an urban school district in California and found that an abundance of

their decisions was based on the results of standardized student testing and made choices for personnel, curriculum, and instruction amongst themselves, allowing little to no public deliberation. Sutherland (2020) completed a qualitative, multiple-unit case study interviewing 17 district leaders in Vermont. This study concluded that school boards collectively did not align their policies on assessment data with state and federal edicts of teacher and education evaluation.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, public school systems are overseen by locally elected or appointed school boards and superintendents. There are 500 individual school districts across Pennsylvania, educating approximately 1.6 million students and employing approximately 121,000 educators (Pennsylvania School Boards Association Research, 2021). School districts adopt board policies, procedures, and administrative regulations. Policy manuals can include sections regarding local board procedures, programs, pupils, employees, finances, property, operations, and community. Sections and subsections often may contain links to Federal or State Education Laws.

Building Principals

Building principals, second to educators, have the next greatest impact on student achievement (Bush, 2021; Leithwood et al., 2008, 2020). While their impact may not be due to direct interaction with students, the impact comes indirectly through their interactions with staff and leadership skills that affect teacher quality as the instructional leaders of their schools (Cohen, 2020; Hattie, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2020). Leithwood et al. (2020) outlined domain practices of effective school leaders from combined evidence-based research conducted by Day et al. (2011), Hitt and Tucker (2016), Leithwood and Louis (2012), Leithwood and Sun (2012), Leithwood et al. (2019), Liu and Hallinger (2018), Sun and Leithwood (2015), and Sun and

Leithwood (2017). These domains of leadership practices include setting directions, building relationships, developing people, developing organization to support desired practices, and improving instructional programs. Principals have the ability to improve instruction by centering on the constitution of their educators and by providing opportunities for teacher development (Cohen, 2020; Cohen-Vogel et al., 2013; Grissom et al., 2013). Table 1 below provides specific leadership practices included in each domain.

Table 1

Leadership Practices within Domains of Practice

Domains of practice	Specific leadership practices
Set Directions	Build a shared vision. Identify specific, shared, short-term goals. Create high-performance expectations. Communicate the vision and goals
Build Relationships and Develop People	Stimulate growth in the professional capacities of staff. Provide support and demonstrate consideration for individual staff members. Model the school's values and practices. Build trusting relationships with and among staff, students, and parents. Establish productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives.

Develop the Organization to Support Desired Practices	Build a collaborative culture and distribute leadership. Structure the organization to facilitate collaboration. Build productive relationships with families and communities. Connect the school to its wider environment. Maintain a safe and healthy school environment. Allocate resources in support of the school's vision and goals. Staff the instructional program
Improve the Instructional Program	Provide instructional support. Monitor student learning and school improvement progress. Buffer staff from distractions to their instructional work

Note: Adopted from Leithwood (2020).

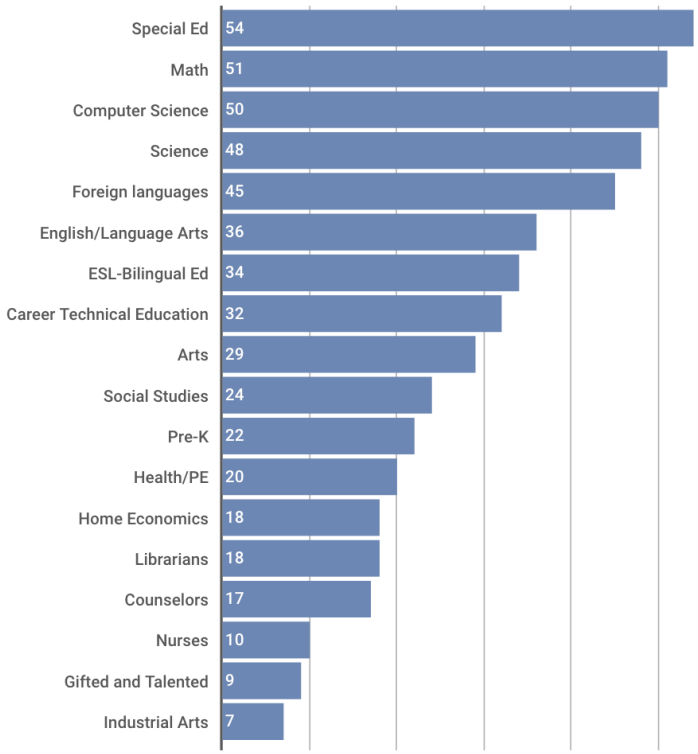
In addition to leadership practices, building principals need to be able to adapt and appropriately respond to situated, professional, material, and external influences as well as legal obligations (Leithwood, 2020). Personal character and levels of subjective feeling can affect how principals lead and implement policy (Cohen et al., 2020; Leithwood, 2020). Cohen (2020) concluded their research by acknowledging that the character of a principal and a principal with a strong sense of agency are more inclined to convey information to educators and staff more quickly, exert more effort in teacher evaluations, and provide support to help educators improve.

Educators

The Condition of Education, a congressionally mandated annual report, is used to aid policymakers and the public in overseeing the educational progress in the United States. This is accomplished by outlining recent statistical data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and other educational sources (Irwin et al., 2022). Statistical data from 2017-2018, the most recent data available, indicate there were 3.5 million part-time and full-time educators working in the public school system for grades K-12, with 1.8 million teaching in an elementary setting (Irwin et al., 2018). While this may seem like an abundance of educators, in rural areas in the United States, there is a shortage of educators (Oyen & Amy Schweinle, 2021). According to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (eCFR) title 34 CFR 682.210(q)(8)(vii), "teacher shortage area means an area of specific grade, subject matter, or discipline classification, or a geographic area in which the Secretary determines that there is an inadequate supply of elementary or secondary school educators." Factors such as lower salaries, less opportunity for professional development, and workload contribute to the teacher shortage in rural areas. In addition to shortages in rural areas, higher shortages are reported among specialties, including special education, math, computer science, science, and foreign languages (U. S. Department of Education, 2016). Figure 3 below shows a graphical representation of several states and territories reporting specialty-specific statewide teacher shortages from 2016-2018.

Figure 3

Specialty-specific Statewide Teacher Shortages, 2016–2018



Note: Specialty-specific statewide teacher shortages from 2016–2018 (U. S. Department of Education, 2016).

Education reveals the state's necessities at any given moment shaping the character, role, and responsibility of educational individuals, including educators (Teruya, 2021). Educators are of great importance to our society. They teach future generations, providing students with a safe environment to learn and grow, introducing them to new ideas, and empowering their young minds to think outside the box across all subjects, including art, science, language, humanities, and social sciences (Stapleton, 2018). However, educators who manage instruction in the classroom tend not to have an abundance of control over decisions handed down from the administration (Lee et al., 1991; Paino, 2017; Renuzulli et al., 2011). Teaching is historically

considered a women's profession and is one of the least respected, lowest-paying professions (Drudy, 2008). Stapleton indicated that discussion amongst educators explains that educators are concerned about their lack of voice, privilege, and independence. In addition, some would say teaching is not valued as a profession.

Perceptions of Educators

The perception of the teaching profession and educators is subjective, factoring in pay, working conditions, education, trust, respect, and the acknowledgment of expertise (Thompson, 2021). Everton et al. (2007) found that educators tend to underrate how people perceive them and the teaching profession. Their research found that 50% of the 1,815 participants surveyed believe teaching is a worthy profession. Cunningham (1992) reported that the perception of educators had been relevant since the 1940s. Turkish educators believe society views the teaching profession as suitable because of the time educators have off and their work hours (Ilagan & Ceviz, 2019). In contrast, educators in the United States perceive the status of the teaching profession negatively (37.1 out of 100), whereas the American public has a more positive perspective (48.7 out of 100) (Dolton et al., 2018). Niessl (2018) suggested that educators in the United States, at no time in history, have experienced a sense of professional status. In 2013, the teacher's respect status index ranking for the United States was 38.4, and in 2018 it was reported as 39.7. The United States is ranked 16th out of 35 countries (Dolton et al., 2018; Dolton & Mercenary-Gutierrez, 2013). Concerning other professions, head educators also referred to as school principals, were ranked 6th out of 14. Out of 35 countries surveyed, primary educators were ranked on average at 6.4, with only web designers, social workers, and librarians ranking lower (Table 2).

Table 2

Average Status Rank Score Across 35 Countries

Occupation	Average rank (14 highest and 1 lowest)
Doctor	11.6
Lawyer	9.5
Engineer	9.1
Head Teacher	8.1
Policeman	7.8
Nurse	7.4
Accountant	7.3
Local Government Manager	7.3
Management Consultant	7.1
Secondary School Teacher	7.0
Primary School Teacher	6.4
Web Designer	5.9
Social Worker	5.8
Librarian	4.6

Note: The average status rank score (out of 14) by occupation across the whole sample of all 35 countries (Dalton et al., 2018).

Perception shapes attitudes, and attitudes toward a profession are an influential factor in success in that profession (Kavgacı, 2022). Baroudi (2017) conducted a qualitative study on media mentalities and educators' work concluding that *Australia's* continual negative reporting about the aspects of teaching could influence public perceptions of educators and that educators need to be aware of the media while becoming political activists. Will (2018) recounted how

teacher activism may have led to an increase in the public supporting teacher pay increases. In West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Colorado, large walkouts and teacher strikes helped raise public support for teacher pay raises of 16%. Dalton et al. (2018) found that the United States general population believes educators are underpaid by $7,500.

Recent technological advances have raised both positive and negative views of educators and the public education system. The increase in cell phone technology has placed video recording devices in the pockets of nearly all students and has increased public awareness in the classroom because educators are being recorded by students or staff, and these videos are often shared on social media (Rice & Deschaine, 2021). At the onset of Covid-19 and school shutdowns, many educators were forced into online teaching, which placed some parents in a virtual classroom, thereby increasing parental criticism. Covid-19 also gave way to state governments and local school boards enacting policies, forcing educators to implement them. Educators were tasked with learning online technology, creating digital content, and establishing new classroom management strategies, teaching styles, and ways to conduct assessments. This intensified educators' working conditions, increased teacher responsibilities (Beames et al., 2021), and no doubt left many educators with intensified psychological reactance.

Teacher Involvement

Educators experience many challenges that prohibit their participation in policymaking. The nature of a teacher's workday and workload are factors that hinder their ability for involvement. Educators experience a lack of time, feelings of isolation, and challenges derived from the control design of schools (Good et al., 2017). Of these, lack of time seems to be the leading factor because educators spend much of their day engaging in teaching requirements, and they report that time continues to be an increasingly scarce commodity. A lack of communal

time is also a concern for educators. Educators need time to have solid interaction with their colleagues, to navigate through policies handed down to them for implementation, and to participate in advocating policy (Coburn, 2001; Good et al., 2017; Spillane, 2004). Educators have a predominant feeling of being left out when it comes to policymaking (Shieh, 2021b). Administration within the school district should support and encourage educators to become participants in education policy, and legislators should open the door for educators to actively participate in the educational policy process (Jones et al., 2017).

Educators see policymaking as an overwhelming, vague undertaking, leaving them feeling unable to circumnavigate the process (Good et al., 2017). Teacher identity also contributes to their ability to participate in the policymaking process (Shieh, 2021b). Jones et al. (2017) suggested that pre-service educators should be given the opportunity in the educational process to partake in a career-building program designed to prepare them for participation in education policymaking and an opportunity to engage in this practice at all levels of government. Educators are often placed in the category of implementors and recipients of policy in place of policy creators. In the U.S., roughly 36% of educators agree they can raise concerns or issues of importance, and 38% agree that there is an atmosphere of trust in their school (Ingersoll et al., 2018). In addition, 45% of faculty believe leaders support educators. Using the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) survey, 23% of faculty report educators as having a moderate role in decision-making within their schools. Results from a national survey of educators and principals in 2015-2016 reveal that 84% of educators in the United States think they have an impact on determining curriculum, 81% believe they have an effect on deciding the content of in-service programs, and 50% think they have an effect on teacher evaluations (Taie & Goldring, 2020). Within the classroom, 85% of educators indicate they have some control over

selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught, and 84% believe they have a say in selecting textbooks and other instructional materials.

The American Federation of Educators & Badass Educators Association conducted a study in 2015 and found that 79% of educators felt disrespected by elected officials, and 77% felt disrespected by media outlets (Stapleton, 2018). In Pizmony-Levy and Woolsey's (2017) quantitative study, educators alleged that Governor Christie was spreading negativity concerns with public education and believed education is being de-professionalized by policymakers who attempt to provide solutions to educational problems with limited or no expert knowledge or experience. Education has struggled to move from an occupation to a profession due to funding, accountability, credentialing process, lack of career advancement, and the social stigma that teaching is strictly a feminine career (Good et al., 2017). Good documented in their research that educators' lack of envisioning themselves as a professional directly affects how they view their legitimacy in influencing educational policy. Educators are deficient in time to work together, outside of the control of their schools, to build the capacity and be seen as professionals with the expertise needed in policy design. They need to be supported to advocate for themselves when faced with policies in which they have no buy-in. Stapleton proclaimed there is an immediate necessity to reach out a political hand to teacher research for the purpose of acknowledging educators as educated professionals. Galey-Horn et al. (2019) professed that those who bring testimony in legislative inquiries have a chance to change important information to bring to light which policies may be adopted. However, policymakers and legislators often only depend upon those whom they prefer. Educators must become policymakers in their own right, and policymaking needs to be developed with more strategic, authentic, and powerful methods.

School success hinges on allowing educators to implement policy and participate in its creation (Jones et al., 2017).

Teacher Response to Policy

Policies in the education field are being developed at an alarming rate from the preschool level to the university level (Curran, 2019). Policymakers and other stakeholders should consider the importance of teacher perceptions and acceptance of proposed policies (Schulte, 2018). Ball (2017) pointed out that policies, in general, are translated, put in play, adjusted, negotiated, challenged, and often misunderstood. Shieh (2021b) compelled policy researchers to meet educators where they are, ensuring they are understood as the front-line workers of policy implementation.

Educators are directly responsible for delivering educational directives to their intended recipients (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Jones & Dixon, 2017; Knapp et al., 1998; Lerman, 2012; Lipsky, 1980). Educators interpret and adapt policies created by out-of-touch policymakers and district administration, exercising resourcefulness to make them applicable to students while keeping students' individual needs in mind (Jones & Dixon, 2017; Lipsky, 1980). The interpretation of a policy makes the reality of that policy achievable in a real-life situation (Cohen & Aviram, 2021).

The manner in which educators choose to implement policies can be linked to a teacher's perceptions, including their sense of self (Teruya, 2021). Wilcox & Lawson (2017) referred to this as teacher agency and further explain individual and group opinions, objectives, circumstances of the school district, and others within the community formulate those teacher perceptions. Perryman et al. (2017) referred to these as components of translation. Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer (2016) suggested educators may not accept a policy that is founded on

principles contrary to their own beliefs and may not implement practices that are not parallel to their rationalities. Often, educators are asked to accept and implement policies they find 'controversial and challenging' (Brundrett, 2011, p. 339). Ellison et al. (2018) conducted a phenomenological study exploring educators' lived experiences to gain knowledge of how their position in education policy directs their perspective on education. The results of Ellison's study recognized that educators in the U.S. are commonly discounted from conversations that unequivocally concern them. Additionally, two problems were revealed, systemic inequity and bad policy which subsequently provided four prospective solutions. Educators describe systematic inequity as institutional failures, including misappropriation of funds, sociological problems within families, and inequality (Anderson et al., 2021; Ellison et al., 2018). Educators characterized a bad policy as policies that produce a one size fits all system poorly envisioned and implemented by leadership and often lack practical understanding in the classroom.

Solutions to systematic inequity and bad policy include shared decision-making, contextual goals, time, space, and resources, and the use of schools as community resources (Ellison et al., 2018). Educators often do not have the needed support, understanding, or resources making implementation seem more difficult (Curran, 2019). Bongco & David (2020) found that educators in the Philippines experienced tension when implementing curriculum policies adopted from the *K to 12 Education Program* in 2012. These tensions include a sense of confusion yet appreciation. For example, when implementing curriculum policy, educators have misinformation which can lead to confusion; however, educators were appreciative of the information they were given. Educators in this qualitative study also revealed a collective feeling of frustration due to inconsistency in implementation. For example, educators stated that when they met with other educators and discussed the curriculum policy implementation, they realized

they were not implementing it uniformly. Finally, this study revealed that educators felt powerless yet vital. Educators indicated they felt powerless from the conception of the curriculum policy through the implementation phase, with one participant stating, "In the end, we still need to implement it" (Bongco & David, 2020, p. 25).

Educators are considered the front-line bureaucrats who are asked or required to implement policy; however, personal characteristics, organizational conditions, and the environment fuel how a teacher may handle implementation (Cohen, 2018; Cohen & Aviram, 2021). Often, educators meet educational policies with resistance. Scott (2005) introduced the term ‘everyday resistance.’ Everyday resistance is referred to as an individual’s use of various strategies challenging authoritarianism. Ball (2015) professed that a refusal is a form of such resistance. Webb (2006) acknowledged that some educators may create contrived performances as a form of resistance.

Resistance to change can be divided into four categories overt, implicit, immediate, and deferred (Al-Alawi et al., 2019; Robbins & Judge, 2009). Some types of resistance are easier to control than others. Al-Alawi et al. (2019) suggested overt and immediate resistance are inherently easier to control than implicit and deferred resistance. Overt and immediate resistance involves an individual or group speaking up or objecting through direct speech or actions. Implicit resistance can take the form of absenteeism or loss of motivation. Deferred resistance is the most difficult to recognize because an individual can appear to accept a change with minimal reaction, followed by resistance appearing weeks or months later. Braun and Maguire (2018) conducted qualitative research to determine the lived experience of primary school educators in London regarding the implementation of performance policies. Findings from their study indicate educators attempted to second guess policy due to the lack of transparency of

information received. Furthermore, educators resisted policy changes, fearing that student assessments would label them inadequate (Braun & Maguire, 2020). Maguire explained that policy response, including resistance, will vary depending on how policy is constructed or presented.

Humans have an innate reflex to protect themselves from anxieties. Educators, being of the human form, are no different. Educators will implement preventive measures to restrain stress and control anxiety (Braun & Maguire, 2020). Participants in the Braun and Maguire study experienced feelings of anxiety, and it was documented that they felt they were participating in policies they did not believe in or disagree with, leaving them feeling they had no other recourse but to comply. Gilbert (2015) termed this 'disaffect consent' which is the acquiescing to a policy in tandem with value-based rejection. Pizmony-Levy and Woosley (2017) conducted a quantitative study of teacher reactions to inflexible accountability policies and documented educators' reactions to a policy were affected by the politics surrounding those in favor of enacting such policy, as well as their perceptions of how the policy was to be implemented and their view of possible outcomes to the policy. Educators will be more supportive of implementing policy reform if they find it valid. Conversely, educators will struggle to implement policies they do not find valid (Gross et al., 1971; Spillane et al., 2002; Wang, 2008).

Positive Effects of Policy

Effective educational policies assist in establishing a vision or goal and, when versed in the crux of a value system, can encourage to devote time and energy to changes needed to attain the desired outcome (Horner, 2020). Effective policies can also establish opportunities for improvement, be that political, organizational, or fiscal. Curran (2019) conducted a research review regarding the role of the policy implementer during education reform, stating it may be

possible that introducing a new policy can present fresh opportunities for implementors by allowing them to think about new policies, giving them the ability to create change (Ball et al., 2011).

Some education policies are enacted to increase educators' quality and, subsequently, the academic advancement of students (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) argue that increases in teacher quality are essential to a country's economic development. Lafortune et al. (2018) analyzed district-level finance data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) annual census of school districts and the Census of Governments; state SFR events; average family income by district from the 1990 Census; and the NAEP accomplishment measures, combined to the district-year level and found that finance changes at the state-level were successful in advancing academic achievement of students living in low-income areas. This success was attributed to decreased class sizes, an increase in instructional spending, and investment in capital assets. Kraft et al. (2020) conducted a study of teacher accountability reforms and their effect on new educators using statistical data from the U.S. Department of Education, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) from 2002 through 2016 along with a Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). Findings had some negative connotations, including a decrease in the supply of educators, which negatively impacted student achievement, particularly in larger, low-income school districts. On the flip side, evaluation reforms have increased the quality of new educators.

Negative Effects of Policy

The implementation of a policy may have negative effects on educators' overall well-being. Teacher turnover, either through a change in the building, district, or a complete career

change, has been linked to stress, burnout, salary, and job satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2017). This type of teacher turnover is known as teacher attrition and is a growing concern in the United States. Studies have shown that 40% to 50% of new educators will leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Darling- Hammond, 2010; Ingersoll, 1996). Elyashiv (2019) found both explicit and implicit possibilities for teacher attrition. Explicit attrition is a more formal element of attrition, whereas implicit is hidden. Their mix-method study concluded that educators forsook the teaching profession hinged around the stressful work environment and deprived work conditions. Mota et al. (2019) found that legislation was an essential cause of teacher tension. How a person copes with psychosocial, contextual, and physical tasks and burdens within their environment directly affects their mental and physical well-being (Mota et al., 2019; Sterling, 2012). Goldstien (2014) proclaimed that educators are chastened for their failure to perform a miracle; however, they are taunted with the task of performing impossible deeds to repair mounting social and economic gaps, all with a lack of educational funding (Stapleton, 2018). Policies such as NCLB, where test scores have become a gauge for student achievement, penalize educators who teach underperforming students. Another source of teacher stress and burnout centers around how the media portrays educators.

Educator Reactance

Educator portrayal, coupled with unclear job expectations, a fear of losing their job, and educators' lack of permission to make decisions (American Federation of Teacher & Badass Teachers Association, 2015), has resulted in reactance that might culminate in nervousness, emotional fatigue, and annoyance which can lead educators to feel exhausted (Quick & Stephenson, 2008). Pishghadam et al. (2022) completed a quantitative study examining the association between teacher burnout, psychological reactance, and the interceding role of

spiritual intelligence. Results of their study indicate that reactance and burnout were positively correlated. Furthermore, reactance resulted in nervousness, emotional fatigue, and annoyance which consequently produced feelings of exhaustion in educators (Pishghadam et al., 2022; Quick & Stephenson, 2008). Teacher stress and burnout occur more frequently during the first five years of teaching. Gallant and Riley (2014) refer to this as the "vulnerability period," where 40% to 50% of educators quit their job.

Career Resilience

Career resilience (C.R.) is a term that may be linked to psychological reactance. Career resilience also coincides with psychological resilience relying on an individual's characteristics to adjust. Generally, individuals with an ability to overcome demonstrate characteristics of success, high expectations, positive views, high self-assurance, willpower, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, humor, flexibility, determination, and perseverance. (Dyer and McGuiness, 1996; Garmezy, 1991). Individuals in the workforce controlled by people of authority identify adversely with C.R. proposing that people who feel they have control over the events that influence their lives and who attribute their successes and failures to their actions are more resilient in their vocations (Lyons et al., 2015). Karl Marx and Frederick Engels describe two classes of people in a capitalistic society: the business owner and the working class. They indicated that people in the working class had limited control and independence over their work leading to reactivity and resentment (Lake & Rewinkel, 2019). This reactivity and resentment can lead to counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs), which in turn provide a setback to the goals of an organization or business.

Teacher resilience is the glue that holds it all together. Resilience allows educators to face criticism, improve job satisfaction, develop interpersonal relationships, and have empathy and a

sense of agency (Wang, 2021). Studies conducted internationally have led to resources that improve teacher resilience (Larson et al., 2018; Phillips, 2021). Personal resources such as motivation and social or emotional competence, in addition to coping strategies such as problem-solving and goal setting, are among those resources (Mansfield et al., 2016). The teaching profession recognizes resilience as a capacity, process, and outcome. Resilience depends upon a teacher's capacity to control personal and contextual resources to push through challenges. This process relies on the characteristics of individual educators as well as their personal and professional backgrounds to enable positive outcomes (Beltman, 2015). Mansfield developed a framework to build resiliency in pre-service educators. This framework is referred to as BRiTE and includes building resilience, relationships, well-being, motivation, and emotions (Table 3).

Table 3

Building resilience in teacher education: The BRiTE framework.

Theme	Informed by the literature	Example pre-service topics	Examples of teaching and learning strategies
Building resilience	Resilience is a dynamic, multifaceted process where individuals mobilize personal and contextual resources and use coping strategies to enable resilience outcomes.	What is resilience? Why is resilience important for educators?	Reflecting and discussing with peers, mentors, educators Examining case studies and videos illustrating professional challenges and authentic scenarios
Relationships	Social competence (for building relationships, support networks, and working collaboratively), setting boundaries, communication	Understanding relationships and resilience Building relationships in schools Working in a professional team Building personal and professional support networks Using social media support networks Communicating effectively	Analyzing videos of educators talking about how to address challenges. Identifying and practicing adaptive coping strategies Practicing reframing skills and optimistic thinking Practicing effective communication skills for a range of situations
Well-be**i**ng	Seeking renewal, work-life balance, time management	Understanding personal well-being and mental health Responding to and managing (dis)stress. Healthy living	Reflecting on personal resources and strategies via self-assessment tools and planning for self-development

		Managing work-life balance Time management	
Motivation	Efficacy, value, a sense of purpose, a sense of vocation, initiative, high expectations, problem-solving, professional learning, goal setting, help-seeking, reflection, persistence	Maintaining motivation Persistence and efficacy Problem-solving processes Goal setting and management Help-seeking Ongoing professional learning	Conducting action research projects
Emotions	Emotional competence, optimism, empathy, hope, courage, humor, emotion regulation, mindfulness	Emotional awareness Optimistic thinking Enhancing positive emotions Managing emotions	

Note: Building resilience in teacher education: The BRiTE framework taken from Mansfield et al., 2016.

Pre-service educators must be aware that resilience is something one obtains over time and should be seen as a process that provides an opportunity to continue learning and improving (Mansfield et al., 2016). The second letter in BRiTE refers to relationships. Relationships are crucial in building resilience, and pre-service educators must have the necessary skills to build relationships in new settings and situations. Communication skills and strategies provide a means for developing supportive relationships and help involve students and their families effectively and manage challenging exchanges. Teacher well-being is another important outcome related to teacher resilience. Ferguson (2008) explained that well-being is a person's psychological, physical, and emotional health. Teacher personal care is not a fundamental concern in current professional standards. It is important for educators to understand their mental health and overall well-being, to obtain a balance between work and home, and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Motivation-related outcomes involve job satisfaction, a sense of purpose, persistence, and

increased initiative. Finally, emotional competence and intelligence are essential personal resources that can lead to work satisfaction, enthusiasm, and passion.

Could resilience be motivated through reactance? Hajek and Häfner (2021) collected data that suggests how an individual manages reactance evolves into resilience. Their quantitative research was designed to understand better the dimensions of compliance that took place when actions were taken to control Covid-19. Hajek and Häfner found that an increase in reactance to restrictions to contain the coronavirus was contingent on an individual's perspectives of the limitations of freedom. They explain that their study expands the psychological reactance theory in that it is a factor in individual behavior and public behavior. Their study sheds light on a new perspective of the defining moment between resilience and resistance in the public domain during Covid-19 and the future.

Summary

There is a great divide between policy ideation or creation and classroom implementation (Schulte, 2018). The creation and enactment of policies, whether in general society or specific to education, significantly impact individuals. How policies are received and ultimately implemented not only affects the actors, but those effects trickle down to others within the community. There is a vast amount of research concerning policy ideation (Bertrand & March, 2015; Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2016; Cho & Wayman, 2014; Coburn, 2001; Hill, 2001; Louis et al., 2005; Spillane et al., 2002). Researchers have studied the effects of teacher interpretation of policy and the effects on policy implementation. Over the past two years, society has had to bear the brunt of continually enacted and handed down policies and mandates. How society has reacted to these policies can be seen publicly through various social media and other media outlets. Before the recent Covid-19 pandemic, Americans assumed they had the

freedom to make their own decisions; however, when Covid entered American soil, government entities began demanding isolation, wearing masks, social distancing, and vaccinations, and many Americans experienced psychological reactance (Vail, 2021).

However, due to the topic's sensitivity and possible recourse, K-5 educators' lived experiences concerning policies and mandates created by policymakers remain unknown (Shieh, 2021). The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. The goal was to give voice to the actors behind the scenes who have no choice but to follow the directives of federal, state, and local governments, as well as school boards, districts, and building administration. I believe the theoretical value of my study closes the gap in the literature for research regarding recent policies and mandates and how they have affected educators' freedoms in the classroom and interaction with other staff and students. From a practical stance, I pray that my study will be informative to government officials, legislators, and school district leaders and provide an understanding of educators' psychological reactance and the effects of recent policies and mandates on overall teacher well-being.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. The hermeneutic phenomenological research design presented includes a rationale for why it was appropriate for this study. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is founded on a common understanding of an occurrence to grasp better an individual's experience (Dibley et al., 2020). Research questions included provide a means of inquiry about the phenomenon, free of assumptions, and succinctly address all components of the population (Peoples, 2020). A description of the setting and a brief overview of demographic information regarding participants is also provided. Next, researcher positionality is discussed, including motivation for conducting this study, interpretive framework, and philosophical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. Procedures have been explained in detail, including permissions, the recruitment plan, the data collection plan, and the data analysis plan. Finally, the trustworthiness of the research was reviewed, including credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability.

Research Design

Qualitative research is recommended when studying participants' lived experiences where the researcher is the central instrument and is generally conducted in the participants' natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, I used the phenomenological methodology to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates sent down from policymakers

and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. Rather than using a case study, which would have provided an in-depth description and case analysis of a single case, phenomenology explains what the participants in the study have in common as they experience the phenomenon, which was better suited for this research.

The founder of phenomenology was Edmund Hursserl, a mathematician from Moravia, known today as the Czech Republic. Hursserl believed phenomenology could be used as an experimental method based on the values of phenomena in which the authentic principles of the experience stood out (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). Phenomenological research consists of two main approaches, hermeneutical and transcendental. Transcendental phenomenology aims to accurately describe a lived experience while remaining unbiased (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher may know of but may not be directly impacted by the phenomenon. The researcher must be able to set aside their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and judgments to attain the authenticity of the participants' experiences. Hursserl referred to setting aside bias as epoche, which in Greek is translated as "to stay away from or abstain." (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). While Husserl created the principles of transcendental phenomenology, Clark Moustakas translated those principles into a qualitative method, providing a systematic approach to exploring data related to lived experiences (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Martin Heidegger created the hermeneutic philosophy based on his belief that researchers cannot separate their personal experiences (Peoples, 2020). Therefore, the researcher can share their biases and experiences in hermeneutical phenomenological studies. The term “hermeneutics” is interpreted from the Greek word hermeneuein, which means “to interpret.” Hermeneutics occurs when lived experiences are compiled and interpreted into descriptions (Guillen, 2019). Individuals possess preset thoughts or opinions that may be modified as new

information becomes available. Heidegger referred to this as the hermeneutic circle, which is the progression of understanding a phenomenon.

For this study, I chose hermeneutical phenomenology because I work in a public school as a speech-language pathologist, experiencing many of the same phenomena educators experience, including implementing policies in which I have not been given a voice in their creation. I desired to interpret teacher perceptions about recent policies they have been required to implement, giving voice to those the literature shows are disregarded throughout policy creation (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Stapleton, 2018). Through this methodology, I attempted to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies.

Research Questions

Qualitative research questions should be unrestricted and developing (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In addition, the central research question in phenomenology must explore a lived experience (Peoples, 2020). Sub-questions enable researchers to break the central research question down into specific areas of investigation and, in phenomenology, may aid in capturing the essence of the study. This study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators as they are required to implement policies handed down to them from legislators and other stakeholders in which they may not be involved in creating to describing their experiences, perceptions about recent policies, the perceived impact their experiences have had on their well-being, and the effects this has on psychological reactance and resilience. The following research questions guided this study.

Central Research Question

CRQ: What are the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders?

Sub-Question One

SQ1: What are K-5 educators' perceptions about recent policies they have been required to implement?

Sub-Question Two

SQ2: How do K-5 educators describe the influence that implementing policy has on their well-being?

Sub-Question Three

SQ3: How do K-5 educators describe the influence psychological reactance has when obligated to implement policies beyond their control?

Setting & Participants

Data collection usually begins with selecting sites and participants, although it is not necessary to start here (Creswell & Poth, 2107). The research setting is the physical location of the participants (Given, 2008). A comfortable and informal setting is usually the most useful (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Dibley et al. (2020) suggested purposive sampling as a preferred method in selecting participants because this method handpicks participants who can provide the researcher with desired information about the research problem. Purposive sampling may result in the likelihood that participants will deliver data to address each research question (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Dibley et al., 2020). According to Peoples (2020), dissertation students should describe the population of interest by providing demographic information, including age range, gender, job title, ethnicity, and geographical location. Creswell and Poth describe various sampling strategies used in phenomenological research. Criterion purposive sampling was used

in this study to maintain quality and to ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomenon.

Setting

This research was not conducted at an official site, and no assistance was requested in recruiting participants; therefore, no site permission was needed. The setting for my study was a school district in western Pennsylvania. The PDE oversees 500 public school divisions in the state, and during the 2019-2020 school year, there were a total of 119,966 educators employed in Pennsylvania public schools (Research for Action, 2020). The school district is governed by a local school board and is managed by a superintendent. Nine schools, 2,512 students, and 184 educators are in the district. In addition, 100% of educators employed in the district are licensed, and 94.5% have three or more years of experience.

Microsoft Teams was used to collect data in the research setting, due to the method used in selecting participants and the benefits of the Microsoft Teams platform. Microsoft Teams allowed the researcher to network with participants at their convenience using a secure platform. The benefits of using Microsoft Teams included the ability to track interviews, the ability to record and transcribe interviews, the ability to keep interview files secure, and the ability to perform focus groups. In addition, using Microsoft Teams allowed the researcher to conduct interviews with other participants that were referred to through snowballing (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples, 2020; Polkinghorne, 2005). Conducting research online via Microsoft Teams allowed the researcher unrestricted access (Bengry, 2018; Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2017). This research did not rely on the site for recruitment; therefore, no site permission was needed.

Participants

Individuals employed by bureaucratic agencies, including public school entities are subject to adhering to mandates and policies set forth by the state Departments of Education (PDE) (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 2020). K-5 educators and speech-language pathologists, who have experienced the involuntary implementation of policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders were selected for this study and included a sample size of 10 participants. Peoples (2020) states that the sample size needs to be large enough to reach data saturation. Given (2008) suggests that data saturation or redundancy can be achieved with a sample size of 15 to 20 participants. However, she notes that sample sizes vary depending on the structure and substance of the study. Criteria for participation included a minimum of three years of teaching experience and some degree of self-reported frustration with educational policies. Participants were chosen from the researcher's contacts in order to develop a thorough study of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2011; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher's role in the study can be broken down into two distinctive roles, tacit and interactionist (Given, 2008). My tacit role or role as the "ideas" person for this study included conceptualizing the research problem and purpose statement. I am a certified speech-language pathologist with my license and teaching certification to work as such in the state of Pennsylvania. I have worked in the public school sector for 15 years and have personally been affected by mandates and policies handed down by lawmakers and administration. In recent years, educators and related services providers have endured countless policies and mandates that they are expected to implement but have had no consent. Personally, these policies have, at times, harmed my ability to effectively perform my role as a school based SLP and impacted my overall well-being. Therefore, I was interested in learning the lived

experiences of K-5 educators who have also been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. My interactionalist role or affiliation with the participants in this study will mirror a complete member typology. I am an active member of the participants I studied and have revealed my role as a researcher.

Interpretive Framework

As a society, many people believe they have free will to make their own choices. Brehm (1966) defined psychological reactance theory as an emotional state that a person encounters when they feel outside influences and incongruous rules have threatened their freedom. Reactance is a conscious or subconscious distasteful provocation that surfaces when a person is told what to do and is a motivator to restore freedom (Smerek, 2017; Steindl, 2015). I used the psychological reactance theory as the lens throughout the implementation and explanation of my research.

Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that philosophical assumptions incorporate personal beliefs and guide research goals and outcomes. These beliefs do not remain constant throughout life; they change as we become educated and are influenced by our life's journey. Throughout my 15-year career as a school-based SLP, my beliefs about the public education system have not remained consistent. As lawmakers and administration continue laying out new policies in recent years, my beliefs have taken another thinking rationale. I want to believe that our government and school administration have the best interest of our children in mind when adopting policies and mandates. However, I believe their focus may be inner-directed as opposed to focusing on

external variables. This study examined three philosophical assumptions in this section, ontological, epistemological, and axiological.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions question the nature of reality and are a fundamental feature of competent research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Given, 2008). The ontological assumption of this study was based on the belief that multiple realities are associated with the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates to which they have no assent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study of K-5 educators' lived experiences of implementing nonconsensual policies and mandates furnishes multiple perceptions and realities of the participants. Using The Hong Psychological Reactance Scale (HPRS), semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions offered qualitative data to examine the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates, allowing them to reflect on the perceived impact concerning psychological reactance.

Epistemological Assumption

Dibley et al. (2020) described epistemology as the origin of knowledge and how we know what we know. Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that researchers need firsthand knowledge to gain participants' subjective experiences. The epistemological assumption associated with my research holds to the truth, that a person's perception is their reality and is unique to them. In other words, we believe what we perceive to be truthful and create our realities based on those perceptions. Furthermore, it recognizes that experience produces knowledge. The HPRS, semi-structured individual interviews, and self-reflective journaling was interpreted and used to develop themes to provide a great depiction of the essence of the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption embraced my positionality and personal values that surfaced as I studied the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Values fall into two types, intrinsic and instrumental, and are closely related to ethics (Given, 2008). Because I have been working in the public school sector for 15 years and have personally been affected by mandates and policies handed down by lawmakers and administration, I presented my positionality and personal values concerning lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates.

Researcher's Role

In this hermeneutical phenomenological study, I was the instrument for data collection and analysis of the lived experiences of K-5 educators (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have a personal connection with my participants due to being an active member within the same school district. However, I had no formal authority over my participants, and there was no exchange of monetary incentives for this study. It was imperative that, as a researcher, I remained mindful throughout data collection and analysis of my position and interaction with participants and the interpretations of their lived experiences (Given, 2008). I am an SLP with 15 years of experience working in public education, five years with an education agency, and the past 10 years with a public school district. In both settings, I have been required to implement and have been impacted by policies and mandates for which I have had no buy-in. Pennsylvania passed Act 82-Teacher Effectiveness System in 2012. With its implementation in the 2014-2015 school term, SLPs were assessed using the same elements as educators, although SLPs are therapists, much like occupational or physical therapists. Other policies and mandates include Covid-19 masking and being told to adhere to unfounded data to determine therapy frequency. These examples

introduced researcher bias into this study and were addressed as required. In addition, to mitigate these biases, I regularly incorporated and implemented the hermeneutic circle as I collected and analyzed data (Maxwell et al., 2020).

Procedures

What, when, how, and where questions of a study are answered in the procedures section (Peoples, 2020). Therefore, this section describes procedures in rich detail that may assist in replicating this research. The procedures for this study included obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, petitioning participants, data collection, analysis plans by data source, and an explanation of how triangulation is achieved.

Permissions

Obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is necessary to collect data and conduct a research study and provide information about ethics (Peoples, 2020) (see Appendix A). An informed consent form was required to participate in this study. The informed consent was linked to an email stating an agreement to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The informed consent included a clause to withdraw from the study without explanation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) (see Appendix C). This research did not rely on the site for recruitment; therefore, no site permission was needed.

Recruitment Plan

The recruitment plan in qualitative research is the procedure used to ask participants to be involved in a study (Given, 2008). First, a recruitment email was sent to prospective participants for this study. This email included the purpose of my study, informed consent, and directions for returning the informed consent. If no response was received from prospective participants within seven days, a reminder email was sent. After the second email was sent, if no response was

received, those prospective participants were considered non-participants. Snowball sampling was not needed by asking participants to refer additional participants, because participants were able to be obtained through personal contacts (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples, 2020; Polkinghorne, 2005). I followed the above-outlined recruitment steps until 10 participants were obtained. Participation in this study was volunteer based with no monetary incentives. Upon recruitment, participants were sent an email with a link to the survey for the first data collection.

Data Collection Plan

In phenomenological research, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that different sources of information must be gathered to validate the research. Interviews are the most common and highly recommended data collection form. Other forms of data collection for hermeneutic research include focus groups, an analysis of written documents, reflective journaling, and observations of participants in the environment of the phenomenon. I used an adapted, published survey, individual interviews, and a focus group to gather data for my research.

Survey

Survey research is often used in quantitative research to obtain numerically rated data. In qualitative research, surveys can be used as open-ended questions, creating profound and diverse feedback from respondents (Ponto, 2015). There is ongoing controversy regarding using questionnaires, scales, or surveys in qualitative research. In qualitative research, surveys address the diversity of a population and not the number of people having the same characteristics (Jansen, 2010). Patton (2014) stated three types of data collection in qualitative research: interviews, observations, and documentation. Patton (2014, p. 36) includes “written responses to open-ended surveys” in the documentation for qualitative research. Jansen (2010) and Fink (2003) stated that qualitative surveys investigate individuals’ experiences, knowledge, beliefs,

and feelings rather than assigning ordinal parameters. In addition, Jansen attested that the nature of the data rests in the analysis, which decides if the data is quantitative or qualitative. For these reasons, I chose to adapt The Hong Psychological Reactance Scale into an open-ended questionnaire to provide initial data essential to the study.

The HPRS began as a 14-item, 5-point Likert scale created by translating Merz's self-reported questionnaire of trait reactance proneness from German to English in 1989 by Hong and Page (Shen & Dillard, 2005). Hong (1992) completed an analytic validation study on the 14-item scale using nonstudent adults. Results of the study concluded that the scale distinctly defined a four-factor structure, including freedom of choice, conformity reactance, behavioral freedom, and reactance to advice and recommendations (Hong, 1992, p. 512). The coefficients of reliability in Hong's study yielded .81 (alpha) and .76 (split-half). Hong & Faedda (1996) completed another study on the HPRS to assess factorial validity on a larger population of the university and nonuniversity participants and to study the convergent and discriminant validity of a revised HPRS scale which removed three questions thought to be too ambiguous. Results of their study show that the elimination of items 4, 10, and 14 did not significantly decrease internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient decreased from .80 to .77, which is a good and acceptable reliability value (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

I selected to incorporate The Hong Psychological Reactance Scale-Revised (HPRS) in the form of open-ended questions requiring a minimum of two complete sentences in my research to establish K-5 participants' general psychological reactance traits unrelated to the research problem (see Appendix D). A link to the survey was provided to each participant upon their acceptance to participate and the return of the informed consent. Participants were asked to complete the survey independently, providing a rich and thick reflection. More than two

sentences will be encouraged; however, I accepted a minimum of two sentences. The HPRS was expected to take participants approximately 30 minutes to complete. A two-week turnaround was given to participants to complete the HPRS. It was assumed that participants not returning the survey had exercised their right to discontinue participating in my research. The survey was conducted utilizing Google Forms, which automatically sent responses to my Google Drive account. By utilizing Google Forms, participants' anxiety was thought to be lessened, making sharing their experiences less uncomfortable (Patton, 2015).

The purpose of my research was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators as they are required to implement policies handed down to them from legislators and other stakeholders in which they may not be involved in creating to describe their experiences, perceptions about recent policies, the perceived impact their experiences have had on their well-being, and the effects this has on psychological reactance and resilience. The HPRS provided traits including emotional response to restricted choice (questions 4, 6-8), reactance to compliance (questions 1-3, 14), resisting influence from others (questions 10-13), and the reactance of advice and recommendations from others (questions 5 & 9). The HPRS was modified to obtain qualitative information (Shen & Dillard, 2005). These traits were then compared to the responses recorded during the individual participant interviews and the focus group interview to provide triangulation.

Table 4

Hong Psychological Reactance Scale

Instructions: Below, you will find a series of items. Based on the prompt on the left, please provide a minimum of two complete sentences about how you relate to the item using the "Participant Open-Ended Response" boxes on the right.

HPRS Open-Ended Questions	Participants' Open-Ended Responses
1. Regulations trigger a sense of resistance in me.	
2. I find contradicting others stimulating.	
3. When something is prohibited, I usually think, "That is exactly what I am going to do."	
4. The thought of being dependent on others aggravates me.	
5. I consider advice from others to be an intrusion.	
6. I become frustrated when I am unable to make free and independent decisions.	
7. It irritates me when someone points out things that are obvious to me.	
8. I become angry when my freedom of choice is restricted.	
9. Advice and recommendations usually induce me to do just the opposite.	
10. I am contented only when I am acting of my own free will.	
11. I resist the attempts of others to influence me.	
12. It makes me angry when another person is held up as a role model for me to follow.	

13. When someone forces me to do something, I feel like doing the opposite.	
14. It disappoints me to see others submitting to society's standards and rules.	

Emotional response toward restricted choice (4, 6, 7, 8) Reactance to compliance (1, 2, 3, 14) Resisting influence from others (10,11,12,13) Reactance to advice and recommendations (5, 9)

Note: From "Refinement of the Hong Psychological Reactance Scale," by S. M. Hong and S. Faedda, 1996, Educational & Psychological Measurement, 56, p. 177, Copyright© by Sage Publications. Reprinted by Permission of Sage.

Survey Data Analysis Plan

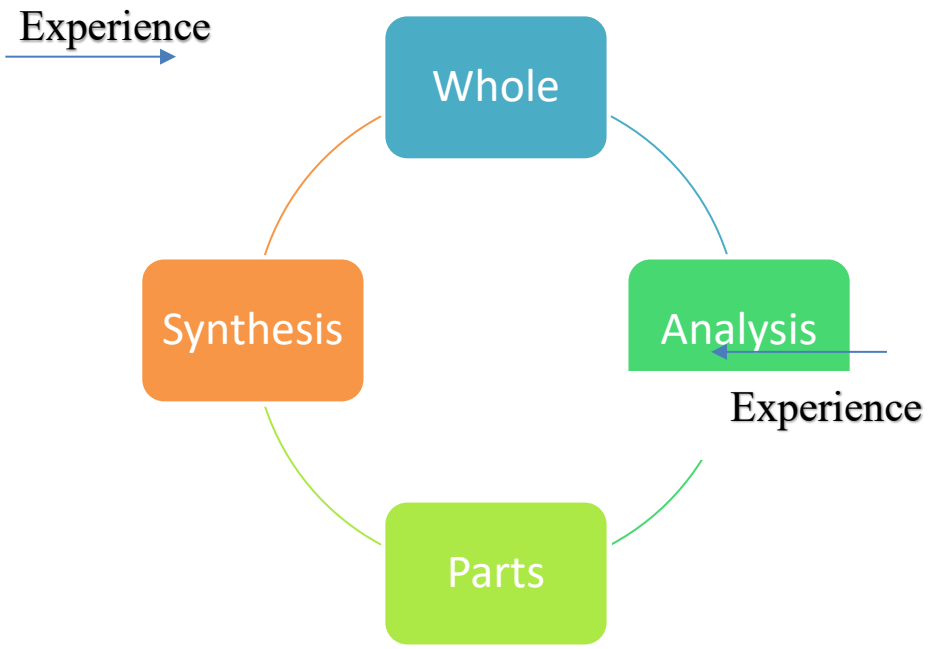
Analysis of the HPRS consisted of listing the emotional reactance to compliance, resisting influence from others, and reactance of advice and recommendations from each participant (Shen & Dillard, 2005). First, participant responses were read, and preliminary codes were assigned to participant responses (Dibley et al., 2020). Preliminary codes were determined using value coding. Value coding reveals participant values, beliefs, and attitudes centered on participants' perspectives of the phenomenon (Saldana, 2021). Values are what an individual thinks or feels is necessary, a belief is what an individual believes to be accurate, and an attitude is how an individual thinks or feels about a topic or another. Next, codes were combined into phenomenological themes. Phenomenological themes were formed by first categorizing codes and then identifying themes by drawing meaning from the data.

Finally, a comparison of results from the HPRS and individual interviews was constructed to determine if there were any differences in each participant's lived experiences

between general psychological reactance and psychological reactance experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. I incorporated the hermeneutic circle by returning to the data in search of additional codes (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Dibley et al., 2020). The hermeneutic circle instructs the researcher to develop themes from individual data as they are grouped into a whole as the researcher interacts with the data (See Figure 4).

Figure 4

The Hermeneutic Circle



Note: Reproduced from (Bontekoe, 1996)

Individual Interviews Data Collection Plan

Interviews, as stated by Moustakas (1994), are comprised of open-ended questions that are objective and are designed to capture the lived experiences of each participant. The semi-structured interview is the most common and recommended interview structure. Semi-structured

interviews help maintain a balance between focusing on the phenomenon and allowing participants to interject other information that may be proven relevant during data analysis (Peoples, 2020). Semi-structured individual interviews were appropriate for my study to illuminate the lived experiences of K-5 educators. Given (2008) declared that words are significant to the qualitative researcher. An individual interview provides a means for the researcher to probe participants in social and personal matters. It is designed to be a personal contact that employs open, direct, verbal questions to obtain narratives rich in detail (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Discovery interviews are used daily in qualitative research because open-ended questions give the interviewee more control, allowing them to provide a well-rounded narrative (Ryan et al., 2009).

I conducted 10 semi-structured individual interviews with K-5th grade educators and speech-language pathologist utilizing Microsoft Teams computer-based platform to accommodate participants' schedules and provide an atmosphere where they felt comfortable sharing their experiences (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). Vandermause and Fleming advised researchers to listen attentively, remain open to all answers received, and not allow personal bias to influence the participants' narrative. First, I scheduled interviews in advance with a time allotment for each interview of 45 to 60 minutes. Second, I provided each participant with a list of interview questions (see Appendix E). All responses and data were recorded using Microsoft Team and the researcher's laptop (Alase, 2017). Some follow-up interviews were needed to fill gaps in collected data (Peoples, 2020; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself as though this is your first time meeting me. CRQ
2. Please explain your experience as a K-5 teacher. CRQ

3. What do you enjoy the most about teaching? CRQ
4. What recent education policies have you had to implement? SQ1
5. From where do you believe this policy originated? SQ1
6. How did you receive the directive to carry out the policy? SQ1
7. How was your adherence to the policy monitored? SQ1
8. What was your experience implementing the policy? CRQ, SQ2, SQ3
9. If implementing the policy required cooperation from students or parents, how did they respond to it? CRQ, SQ3
10. How has the policy impacted your view of education? CRQ, SQ2, SQ3
11. In what ways could educators have a more active role in policymaking at the district, state, or federal level? CRQ, SQ3
12. Explain the impact implementing the policy has had on your health and well-being. SQ2
13. Explain the impact implementing the policy has had on job satisfaction or burnout. SQ2, SQ3
14. Given the definition of psychological reactance, how would you describe the effects of implementing policies on your psychological reactance? SQ3
15. What else would you like to contribute to this study?

Questions one through three established a rapport with participants and gathered basic information about participants. Hinnant-Crawford (2016) reported a disconnect between educational policymakers and those required to execute policy. Questions four through eleven were designed to gather information about the participants' experience receiving and implementing legislative policies. Wilcox and Lawson (2017) used the social theory to determine a teacher's ability to adapt when implementing policy.

Participants' responses were used to establish parallel perspectives. Questions 12 and 13 allowed participants to explain how they perceive policy implementation, how it has impacted their health and well-being, and any impact on job satisfaction or burnout. Mota et al. (2019) and Sterling (2012) touted that how a person copes with psychosocial, contextual, and physical tasks and burdens within their environment directly affects their mental and physical well-being. Question 14 was devised to understand how the psychological reactance theory applies to educators, given current school circumstances. Psychological reactance can look different between individuals, and there is no possible method to understand how individuals will react when their freedoms are at stake. Amini et al. (2019) state that there is limited data on education theory, particularly concerning K-5 educators.

Individual Interviews Data Analysis Plan

According to van Manen (2016), phenomenology is how individuals blend with their lived experiences, and hermeneutics is their interpretation. Interpretation of data understands everyday experiences and discerns how we interact with our environment (Dibley et al., 2020). Data analysis is not a linear process but somewhat circular, “investigating the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (Hycner, 1985, p. 161). Peoples (2020) and Dibley et al. (2020) outlined generalized steps to analyze data in phenomenological research, which include identifying preliminary codes, transforming the preliminary codes into themes, summarizing the participants’ stories making notes of emergent patterns or themes, and finally synthesizing themes into general narratives.

For this study, first, I transcribed individual recorded interviews using a voice-to-text transcription application. Next, all transcribed interviews were manually corrected for 100% accuracy and were be kept secure using a password-protected device in a locked cabinet. Then, I

distributed the transcription to each participant to be checked for content accuracy. At this point, each transcribed interview was given a read-through, recording first impressions of the text in the margins using descriptive, conceptual, and linguistic notes (Smith & Nizza, 2021). Analyzing hermeneutic phenomenological research works in a repeated circular, discerning process referred to as the hermeneutic circle (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Dibley et al., 2020). I used the hermeneutic circle by continually returning to the collected data in search of additional codes.

First, participant responses were read preliminary, giving codes to participant responses (Dibley et al., 2020). Value coding was used to determine preliminary codes. Values, beliefs, and attitudes centered on participants' perspectives of the phenomenon were deduced using value coding (Saldana, 2021). Values are what an individual thinks or feels is necessary. Beliefs are what an individual believes to be true. Attitude is how an individual thinks or feels about a topic or another individual. Value codes were then combined into phenomenological themes. Phenomenological themes are created by categorizing codes and pinpointing themes by identifying meaning from the data. The themes identified through individual interviews were compared to themes identified using the HPRS and synthesized accordingly.

Focus Group Data Collection Plan

Focus groups can add supplementary information that participants may have overlooked in one-on-one interviews (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples, 2020). Peoples (2020) explains that placing participants in focus groups can result in them remembering various details or changing their perspectives. Given (2008) states that focus groups can gather participants with comparable circumstances generating an opportunity for them to participate in purposeful conversations, leading to a better understanding of the phenomenon. For the researcher, conducting focus group interviews can aid in recognizing similarities and differences in participants' experiences (Dibley

et al., 2020). Furthermore, Peoples also pointed out that participants may be more encouraged to share their experiences when they are in a group of others who share their experiences. Alternatively, focus group interviews can involve contradicting participant views and the possibility that some participants may dominate the interview. Therefore, the researcher must be able to allow differences to be shared while making sure all participants have equal opportunities to participate.

For this study, I conducted an online synchronous focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to gain further insight into participants' experience with the phenomenon by encouraging participants to remember details they may not have thought of in the individual interview (Peoples, 2020). In addition, conducting a focus group can help observe similarities and differences in participant responses (Dibley et al., 2020).

I began the focus group by selecting a homogenous group of four participants from the one-on-one interviews who, I believe, were relatable and who, I thought, would be able to openly share their similarities and differences (Bruggen & Willems, 2009; Given, 2008). Next, I scheduled a synchronous Microsoft Teams meeting with participants at an agreed-upon date and time. Sweet (2001) stated that online focus groups usually last 90 minutes. Before conducting the focus group, I obtained consent from participants to record the interview. Finally, the focus group interview was recorded using Microsoft Teams using questions closely related to individual interview questions to assist in the synthesis and triangulation of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018) (see Appendix F).

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to the group.

2. Please share an experience in the school environment when you felt your freedoms may be infringed upon. SQ3
3. Please share your reaction when you felt your freedoms may be infringed upon. SQ3
4. Please share a recent experience you had implementing a policy or mandate. CRQ
5. Tell about any positive results from implementing the policy or mandate. CRQ, SQ1
6. Tell about any negative results from implementing the policy or mandate. CRQ, SQ1, SQ2
7. Thinking back over the past two years, share how you believe your overall well-being has been affected by school policies and mandates. CRQ, SQ3
8. Please share any ideas you may have to get educators more involved in policy creation. CRQ, SQ1, SQ2
9. Compare and contrast your views of educational policies versus general society policies. CRQ, SQ1
10. Why do you feel this way? CRQ, SQ1
11. Is there anything further you would like to share with the group?

Question one established commonality among participants and gathered basic information about participants. Policymakers and policy executors are often disconnected from one another (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Questions two and three were related to the central research question and sub-questions one and two. Participants were asked to gain knowledge of any policies they recall implementing and the positive and negative outcomes or experiences with those policies. Social theory has been used by Wilcox and Lawson (2017) to guide their research in determining a teacher's adaptability during policy implementation. The purpose of question five was to explore participants' thoughts about involvement in policy creation and their

hesitations, if any. According to Good et al. (2017), educators see policymaking as an overwhelming, imprecise task that leaves them feeling incapable of effectively participating in the process. Questions six and seven were asked to focus on psychological reactance. When an individual believes their freedoms are compromised, they may experience psychological reactance differently than another individual having the same freedom compromised (Steindl et al., 2015). Question eight aimed to understand how school policies or mandates may correlate to participants' overall well-being. Coping with psychosocial, contextual, and physical tasks and burdens in an individual's environment affects them physically and mentally (Mota et al., 2019). The final question allowed participants to share any additional information. Focus group questions are closely related to individual interview questions to aid data synthesis and triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Analyzing focus group data is done similarly to individual interviews making sure to observe any topic which piques the interest of most participants (Given, 2008). Data analysis begins during data collection and should be methodical, verifiable, and continuous (Rabiee, 2004). Litoselliti (2003) suggested that data analysis answers three questions:

1. Did the researcher meet their objective?
2. Did the focus group bring about new information?
3. Did the focus group confirm, or challenge information found in previous data?

The analysis began by transcribing the focus group interview word for word, including filler words and denoting pauses, to fully understand participants' perceptions (Dibley et al., 2020). Next, I provided a transcript to each participant for member checking to ensure accuracy. For my study, I selected the experimental coding method, holistic coding applying one code to a

data selection (Saldana, 2021). Then, I distributed the transcription to each participant to be checked for content accuracy. Transcribed data from the focus group was then be given a read-through recording of first impressions using descriptive, conceptual, and linguistic notes (Smith & Nizza, 2021). I then applied preliminary codes to the transcripts using value coding, noting respondent emotions or tones. The values, beliefs, and attitudes addressed by a participant's perspective of the phenomenon were deduced using value coding. Value codes were then combined into phenomenological themes. Creating phenomenological themes involves categorizing codes and isolating themes by identifying meaning from the data. The themes identified through focus groups were compared to those of individual interviews and the HPRS and were synthesized accordingly. Analyzing hermeneutic phenomenological research works in a repeated circular, discerning process referred to as the hermeneutic circle (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Dibley et al., 2020). I used the hermeneutic circle by continually returning to the collected data in search of additional codes.

Data Synthesis

Triangulation in qualitative research uses multiple data sources to understand a phenomenon (Patton, 1999). Data synthesis is applied to develop the interpretation of a phenomenon. Data synthesis and triangulation use multiple data sources to allow for cross-data validity. Triangulation involves four types that can lead to qualitative research validity: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation based on the data collection method used in the research (Fusch et al., 2018; Patton, 1999). Multiple data collection methods are used within one research design, including interviews, focus groups, observations, and journaling (Fusch et al., 2018). This study used methodological

triangulation to strengthen data collected from the survey, individual interviews, and the focus group (Fusch et al., 2018; Manganelli et al., 2014).

In this study, I achieved triangulation using data from surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups to establish common themes and validate my results (Fusch et al., 2018; Patton, 1999). Based on the three unique themes determined from analyzing the collected data, first, I pinpointed similarities and differences in the themes and determined theme consistency, taking care to understand how the different methods influence the conclusion (Carter et al., 2014). Patton (1999) stated that data source triangulation does not always add consistency to the overall themes and does not discount the validity of the research but merely tries to make sense of the differences. Next, I checked the consistency of themes between the survey, individual interviews, and focus groups, in addition to practical reasons for any differences that provide creditability to the research. Van Manen (2104) offered four existential lenses to reflect on a lived experience, including lived body, time, space, and human relations. Finally, I synthesized the themes from all three data sources and prepared a thorough account of the phenomenon, bringing forth an understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Frechette et al., 2020).

Synthesizing was done using the thematic synthesis described by Braun and Clark (2006). First, I familiarized myself with the data by actively reading and rereading collected data. Second, I generated initial codes by systematically organizing the data. Next, I used these codes to identify potential themes or patterns that capture the essence of the research question. After identifying initial themes, the themes were reviewed and adjusted, making sure the themes make sense and whether the data truly supports the theme. Finally, I refined the themes introduced in my analysis, recognizing the essence of each theme and the story it tells.

Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) encompassed credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability into trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is enriched with a clear and precise research design and delivery recognizing researcher bias and verifying reflexivity and co-constitution (Dibley et al., 2020). This section lays the foundation for steps to ensure a thorough study that follows Lincoln and Guba's protocols. Standards of accountability include specific techniques, including triangulation of data, member checking, audit trail, and peer review, which I used to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.

Credibility

Credibility is centered around the integrity and consistency of research findings per the participants' lived experiences and how closely those findings parallel the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Peoples, 2020). The participants and readers should be able to review and make sense of the research design (Given, 2008). I used triangulation of data, debriefing sessions, and member checks to ensure credibility.

Triangulation

Creswell and Poth (2018) referred to triangulation as the use of different methods, informants, documents, and theories to deliver collusion of evidence to validate research accuracy. For this study, I applied triangulation of data collection, theory, and environmental factors to investigate the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates in which they have no buy-in. By using Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale, individual interviews, and self-reflective journaling data collection triangulation was achieved. Data collected from each uphold one another. Theory triangulation was achieved by involving multiple professional perspectives in interpreting collected data (Guion et al., 2011).

Environmental triangulation was accomplished by using various locations, settings, and other fundamental elements related to the study's environment. For example, I interviewed rural and urban elementary school participants to aid environmental triangulation.

Peer Review

I incorporated a peer review of my data to ensure the validity and reliability of my research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Peer reviews were done by employing colleagues to discuss research findings to confirm the logic and clarity of interpretations, uncover potential errors, and identify biases (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). The choice of a peer reviewer included a colleague who has no interest in the lived experience of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates in which they have no buy-in.

Member Checks

Guba (1981) stated that member checks are one of the most critical creditability analyses researchers can perform. As the researcher, I have encountered the phenomenon of being required to implement policies and mandates that I did not buy into, handed down by administration and policymakers. Having encountered the phenomenon can be an advantage during data collection because allowed me to have a clearer understanding of participants' perspectives and perform member checking throughout the interview (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Maintaining an open mind to participants' descriptions of their life experiences was critical, not assuming I fully understand their perspectives. Verification of participant data was addressed following the data transcription by providing participants an opportunity to review the transcription and a rough draft of the completed report, this assisted in member checking. Given (2008) stated that participants should evaluate whether the researcher accurately depicted their experience, the meaning of their experience, or if the researchers' final account does justice to the

participants' experiences. Member checking was done by asking participants to review a transcript of the information they provided (Peoples, 2020). Member checking was completed with all participants and occurred during the data collection process following individual interviews and focus groups.

Transferability

The concept of transferability refers to the ability of the participants' lived experiences to apply to other populations within the context of the study (Dibley et al., 2020; Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Peoples, 2020). Two significant considerations to increasing transferability include how close participants are to the phenomenon being studied and ensuring the research questions are adequately answered (Given, 2008). Achieving transferability occurred through collecting thick descriptive data and developing a thick description of the context (Guba, 1981). I provided ample information regarding the research sites of the K-5 educators to aid readers in their ability to make transfer inferences. The substantial collection of data from K-5 educators in rural and urban elementary schools describes how K-5 educators view implementing policies and mandates in which they have no buy-in.

Dependability

Qualitative research poses many challenges, one of which is the unpredictability of the environment (Given, 2008). Peoples (2020) and Dibley et al. (2020) referred to dependability as a reflection of reliability in that the study is repeatable, giving a detailed explanation of the research process. It is essential regarding dependability that the researcher be mindful that the research context may vary and change. I reported a detailed description of the research process implemented in an unequivocal manner supported by evidence-based literature that can be

replicated for any population. My dissertation committee thoroughly reviewed the procedures used to determine the dexterity of the research method as I have designed it.

Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved by demonstrating objectivity in research findings (Dibley et al., 2020). Reliability and objectivity, at times, are associated with confirmability, the precision of the meaning or truth being articulated (Given, 2008). I implemented an audit trail, self-reflective journaling, and triangulation to promote confirmability (Peoples, 2020; Shenton, 2004). I created a transparent audit trail laying out the data collection and the management of collected data providing all design decisions and allowing readers to track the rationale which led to the interpretation of findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). I employed self-reflective journaling to acknowledge personal biases and preconceived notions, keeping my participants' lived experiences at the forefront of my research. Finally, triangulation was employed by applying triangulation of data collection, theory, and environment investigating the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates in which they have no buy-in.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study included protecting participants' confidentiality by using pseudonyms in participant responses. In addition, published reports do not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records have been stored securely, including in Microsoft Teams, and only the researcher has access to the records. Participant consent forms were required to ensure ethical considerations or implications of the research (see Appendix B). It was articulated to participants that participation in this research is on a volunteer basis, with no monetary benefits being exchanged. Participants were given the

opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time they desire. Any unexpected circumstances that could endanger participants were not desirable, and all precautions were sustained as established by the Liberty University IRB. All collected data will be destroyed after three years.

Summary

Through this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I aimed to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders who are not required to implement such policies. Chapter Three includes the configuration of the research design, data collection, and data analysis to establish the trustworthiness of my research. I used a hermeneutic phenomenological design incorporating a survey, individual interviews, and a focus group interview that provided well-rounded data collection and addressed the phenomenon experienced by individual participants. Using van Manen's (2014) phenomenological research design was the best approach to understanding participants' perspectives.

In this study, I was the instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell &Poth, 2018). The 10 participants in this study were selected from the researcher's contacts and snowballing, who meet the study's criteria. Participants were asked to complete a survey, individual interview, and focus group discussion.

Data collection included an adaptation of the HPRS, individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. Data collection was derived from the central research question and sub-questions. The HPRS provided characteristics in the form of qualitative data, including emotional response to restricted choice, reactance to compliance, resisting influence from others, and reactance to advice and recommendations from others (Shen & Dillard, 2005). Individual

interviews further investigated participants' experiences with the phenomena by using open and direct questions to obtain detailed narratives (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Finally, a focus group of 4 participants provided an outlet for participants to have an open discussion about their experiences and encouraged participants to remember details they may have forgotten during the individual interview (Peoples, 2020). Using three data collection methods provided saturation and triangulation of the research. The hermeneutic circle was used to analyze data, providing an avenue for me to understand the phenomenon from each participant's point of view (Dibely et al., 2020).

The researcher's positionality provided information regarding the interpretive framework and the ontological, epistemological, and axiological philosophical assumptions. The researcher's positionality also captured the role of the researcher throughout the research process. The ontological assumption was based on the belief that multiple realities are associated with the phenomena. The epistemological assumption held the belief that a person's perception is their reality and is unique to them. The axiological assumption embraced any positionality and personal values that may have surfaced.

Using the research of Lincoln and Guba (1985) I shaped the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations of the research. Trustworthiness was sought through member checks, triangulation of data, and debriefing funneled through Lincoln and Guba. Participants' well-being was sought to reduce the risk of harm to them and provide rich, thick data to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates in which they have no buy-in. In addition, I had no formal authority over my participants, and there was no exchange of monetary incentives for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. In Chapter Four, the experiences of 10 K-5 educators are recounted, all of whom have been subject to policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders without their consent. Data collection was obtained through a survey, individual semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. After analyzing the data through various steps in phenomenological research outlined by Dibley et al., (2020) and Peoples, (2020) in conjunction with Heidegger's Hermeneutic Circle, three main themes were identified. Chapter Four includes participant descriptions, data themes, outlier data, and responses to answer the research questions.

Participants

Participants for this study were chosen from personal contacts. Initially, an email was sent to 18 potential participants requesting their participation. Of those, five agreed to participate. The remaining five participants of the 10 participants were contacted either in person or through text. Despite the researcher’s familiarity with the participants, they did not feel compelled to participate. All participants signed and returned a consent form prior to data collection (See Appendix B). All participants met the criteria for participation which included a minimum of three years of teaching experience and some degree of self-reported frustration with educational policies. Data were collected from the 10 participants using Hong’s Psychological Reactance Survey, semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group used to analyze participants'

experiences and to form themes and sub-themes that ultimately answered the central research question and three sub-questions.

All 10 participants were female and held various teaching certificates, granting them the ability to teach kindergarten through fifth-grade students in Pennsylvania. The average number of years of teaching experience for the participants is 17.2 years with a median of 16.5 years. The current roles of participants varied; four participants were speech-language pathologists, one was a sixth-grade teacher, one was an elementary regular education teacher, one was a pre-k teacher, one was an elementary teacher in a partial hospitalization setting, and two were supplemental learning support educators: one at the elementary level and one at the high school level. Table 5 below and Appendix G provide detailed demographics of each participant. Pseudonyms were used to keep participant identities confidential and any demographics or characteristics that may be used to identify participants were removed to maintain participant confidentiality.

Table 5

Individual Interview/Survey Participant Demographics

Educator Participant	Years Taught	Number of Years in K-5	Current Grade Level	Certification
Charlette	10	10	K-8	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Jose	10	10	K-5 Supplemental Learning Support	PA Elementary K-6 PA Special Education K-12
Lila	11	8	K-5	PA Private School - Teacher Nursery/Kindergarten N-K PA Private School - Teacher Soc and Emotionally Disturbed K-12

Loretta	16	16	K-12	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Lucy	33	14	Pre-K	PA Elementary K-6 PA Private School - Teacher Nursery/Kindergarten N-K
Lydia	17	11	6th	PA Elementary K-6 Mid-Level Science 6-9
Sally	10	10	K-8	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Shirley	20	20	K-6	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Tonya	18	10	9^{th}-12^{th} Supplemental Learning Support	Special Education N-12 Middle Level Social Studies
Violet	27	27	Kindergarten	PA Elementary K-6 Program Specialist English as a Second Language (ESL) PK-12

Four focus group participants were specifically chosen from the survey and individual interview participants and included one regular education teacher, one learning support teacher, and two speech language pathologists. Additional parameters were used to choose focus group participants. These parameters included years of teaching service and participants the researcher thought were relatable and would be able to openly share their similarities and differences (Bruggen & Willems, 2009; Given, 2008). Table 6 below includes the demographics for each focus group participant. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants.

Table 6

Focus Group Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Years Taught in K-5	Current Grade Level	Certification
Jose	10	10	K-5 Supplemental Learning Support	PA Elementary K-6 PA Special Education K-12
Lucy	33	14	Pre-K	PA Elementary K-6 PA Private School - Teacher Nursery/Kindergarten N-K
Shirley	20	20	K-6	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Violet	27	27	Kindergarten	PA Elementary K-6 Program Specialist English as a Second Language (ESL) PK-12

Results

Data analysis and triangulation of the three data collection methods, which included an open-ended questionnaire, individual semi-structured interviews, and a focus group, are included in this section. A 17-question survey, which included three demographic questions and 14 open-ended style questions, was completed by each participant. Each participant answered 14 questions during the individual interviews. Participants in the focus group were asked 11 questions. Data was analyzed by identifying significant words, phrases, or sentences describing participants' experiences with the phenomenon, preliminary codes were created, and then these preliminary codes were transformed into emergent patterns or themes, finally, themes were

synthesized into general narratives (Dibley, 2020). Throughout the analysis process, I used the Hermeneutic circle to understand themes as a whole in terms of how the participant responses interact with each other, and how those responses interact with the themes (Bontekoe, 1996). Using the hermeneutic circle, the researcher returned to the data in search of additional codes. Data analysis resulted in three main themes and three sub-themes (Table 7).

Table 7

Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Policy Impracticality *Codes: repetitive tasks, limitations, inappropriateness, bureaucracy, educational practices*	Excessive Workload *Codes: workload, time management, work-life balance, challenges at work*
Professional Disrespect *Codes: teacher empowerment, lack of autonomy, parental engagement, disregard for expertise*	Autocratic Leadership *Codes: regulations, independence, self-determination, autonomy, freedom*
Educator Compliance *Codes: conformity, personal beliefs, policy adherence, attitudes, acceptance*	Policy Oversight *Codes: leadership, compliance monitoring, accountability, enforcement, support*

Policy Impracticality

The theme of policy impracticality is described by the researcher as a policy that involves repetitive extra work from educators. The policy practicality theme arose from the data as educators described how policies they were required to implement, gave way to excessive workload and repetitive actions. All participants agreed that regulations are needed to provide structure but should not contain so many inhibiting factors that they hinder a student's access to information and materials. Participants stated that many policies are not practical because of the increase in workload and redundancy that often accompany them.

While the survey did not require participants to provide information within the teaching realm, educators commented that they become frustrated when decisions were made that were not in the best interest of those they affect, making such policies impractical. Charlotte commented, “I have seen some school districts require every material, activity, and song to be cleared before use in the classroom. This places so many inhibiting factors when providing instruction and can hinder the child's access to certain information and materials.” When talking about policy impracticality, Tonya stated, “I am not strongly resistant to regulations as long as they are sensible and beneficial to all stakeholders.” Shirley said, “Regulations can trigger a sense of resistance when I feel they are overstepping into my area of expertise and not allowing me to do what I feel is appropriate for my students.” Participants stated that when they question a policy or regulation from the district, they demonstrate minimal resistance since their livelihood (paychecks) is dependent on compliance. Participants also stated they should know exactly what is expected of them when issued a policy or regulation. Violet indicated she prefers a clear understanding of what is expected by saying, “I may question the necessity of why a regulation was implemented, but with a clear understanding of reasonable rationality, resistance would be minimal.” Lucy said, “I find I operate best with clear, concise parameters. While I may not agree or like the regulations, I find it beneficial clearly knowing what is expected of me.”

Throughout the individual interviews, participants described feelings of frustration, anger, and at times, resentment when implementing policies that they did not feel were practical. In the interview, Lucy said “Policies are often put in place by people who have no clue how impractical, and often impossible, the practices are. I often have to breathe as I read the new policies demanded of me.” Shirley recommended piloting policies before implementation by stating, “We should trial them maybe in the classroom before actually going through and

implementing the policy change to make sure it works for the well-being of the students and everyone who is involved" and Tonya said, "One size fit all does not fit in education." Lucy also shared a recommendation by commenting, "I usually try to figure out a way to implement them (policies) at least partially in a practical manner. True time spent within the classroom by administration actually demonstrating how to implement the policies they want to be implemented would be a good idea." Sally talked about how the policy she recently had to implement of educators being required to keep their doors locked at all times was not practical by saying, "It makes it difficult and interrupts the education process." Throughout the interviews, participants felt that the administration could do better managing policy impracticality.

Further discussion of policy impracticality took place during the focus group with Violet saying, "Sounds like a good idea, but it is like theory, you know, like it sounds good in theory, but does it work practically?" Loretta backed up Violet's statement by commenting, "They implement things district wide, but they are not necessarily what is appropriate for everybody." Jose referred to student behavior and how sometimes policies given by administration or others does not factor in behaviors by saying, "You do not know what other behaviors or what the kids are going to think about it or just what other issues it may cause." Participants were clear that they believe policy impracticality involves policies that are beneficial to all involved and policies that do not create repetitive extra work.

Excessive Workload

The sub-theme of excessive workload is defined by the researcher as work that is not able to be completed during normal contract hours. All participants described how they have a lack of true preparation time causing them to stay after work hours or take work home with them, resulting in less time to spend with family or friends. When completing the survey, Shirley, who

is a speech language pathologist and is impacted by policies that she perceives require excessive paperwork said, “I work in an area where paperwork is not always returned or is half completed when it is returned. This aggravates me because I am typically trying to scramble to complete tasks due to missing information or information provided later than it should have been.” Lydia wrote, “I sometimes feel there is a lack of collaboration amongst co-workers and administration at times and they just want to tell you what to do. They keep adding more and more to the plate without ever offering helpful advice on how to navigate the changing expectations.” Charlotte also commented on excessive workload when collaborating with co-workers by stating, “I find it difficult to wait for others to complete their part of the work. It is inconvenient to be on someone else’s timeline when I am working to get something done.” The sub-theme of excessive workload resonated throughout participants’ survey responses.

Throughout the individual interviews, participants talked about the amount of work policies bring about and the difficulty they encounter trying to get everything completed during contract hours. For instance, Violet compared the extra work policies created to eating by saying, “they just keep putting more and more on the plate and tell you to stuff your face, like you got to eat it.” Charlotte proposed that maybe educators, specifically those in special education could be given extra days to complete paperwork. She stated, “I think having extra paperwork days (like IEP days) would be very helpful. If 3-5 paperwork days were allotted throughout the school year, I would not fall behind on paperwork as often and wouldn't have to take work home as often.” She then proposed, “Maybe if half days for students were more frequent - maybe students would have half days 1-2 times per month, allowing staff to complete paperwork after the students go home.” Educators also indicated that problems arise when these policies get piled on other policies creating more work causing them to rearrange their daily schedule, which ripples into

other educators' schedules and ultimately affects the students. Throughout the interviews, educators referred to extra paperwork requirements. Charlotte stated, "We only are asked to complete it to make it look like we are doing something extra when, in fact, we are just doing something we had been doing all along." In the interview, Shirley stated, "I am already taking data for my students, so it feels like I am just doing extra work to get the same results." These repetitive actions required extra time and have caused feelings of stress and frustration in all participants. Lila reported, "There is a lack of time to fully attend to tasks I am required to do like preparing engaging standards-based lessons for all classes, completing progress monitoring, and updating individual education plans on my caseload for meetings. Often, I must work on my own time to get everything done adequately." Shirley, who was given a duty requiring her to stand in the hall as students are dismissed said, "I was stressed out at first because even taking those 15 minutes away at the end of the day can be a big difference in me getting a good chunk of my data, like logs and work done, so I wound up moving my schedule around because I knew that it was going to stress me out trying to do that duty and get all of the things done that I normally get done at the end of the day to ensure that I could get done within the hours that I am scheduled to work." Lucy indicated that policies and mandates given during Covid, required her to take, record, and report student and staff temperatures. She said, "It does not sound like much, but when you put all of those things together in a day, where you already do not have enough time, it became very frustrating."

Three of the four participants in the focus group work in special education and believe special education policies have created more and more paperwork which they feel takes away from their time to prepare and implement good lessons. Loretta, a speech language pathologist, indicated that the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has broadened the speech

language pathologists' scope of practice to the point that they could "literally have every student in the building for speech." Focus group participants also reported that many policies or mandates they are required to implement, are tasks they are already doing in their classroom. In the focus group, Violet made the point that the policy she has recently had to implement is a lot of common-sense things you do in the classroom already, and she feels as though this is taking away from core teaching time. She stated, "They keep adding more and more to the plate without ever offering helpful advice on how to navigate the changing expectations." Jose admitted she is not able to take a preparation period or a duty-free lunch. She stated, "I take a lunch/preparation, slash individualized education report writing time from 11:15 to 12:30, and sometimes if I am working on something, I will stay over a little bit because you know, I never take my full time." Excessive workload results in insufficient time to complete work during normal contract hours resulting in them staying late or taking work home without additional compensation.

Professional Disrespect

The theme of professional disrespect is described by the researcher as parents and administration allowing educators to use their professional judgment and expertise in the classroom to provide the best learning environment for their group of students. All of the educators who participated in this study expressed feelings of disrespect as a professional either by legislators, administration, or parents. As pointed out in the literature, legislators, historically think teacher knowledge and beliefs need to be managed by policies and reforms (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Olson, 2002; van Veen & Sleegers, 2006). Participants want to be acknowledged for their professional judgment and expertise.

In the survey, Sally stated she becomes frustrated when she is unable to make free and independent decisions by stating, "This is especially true in regard to some professional

decisions, as I feel at times that I am not heard, and my superiors do not understand my area or why I feel the way that I do." Given the same question, Shirley said, "This is one of my biggest pet peeves. I feel that regardless of my expertise, it will never matter, I am told what to do and I must comply." Lydia commented, "I am a competent person and I do not like to be micromanaged." Violet indicated that educators need to make decisions throughout the day at a moment's notice and need to be able to do so freely by stating, "As a teacher, with a classroom full of students, I need to make decisions every moment of every school day. Without the ability to do that I would not be able to do my job with any certainty."

Professional disrespect resonated in the interview responses as well. During the interview, Loretta, one of the speech language pathologists talked about her supervisor instituting a new policy which required all speech language pathologists in the district to be uniform in their therapy frequency. She stated, "I believe this takes away from us as professionals." Shirley, another speech language pathologist said, "I feel like my professional judgment or expertise does not matter most of the time." Violet, who had taught fourth grade math and science in the same elementary school for most of her career felt disrespected when she was "forced" to bid on a kindergarten position to stay in the school building she had been in for years. She stated, "I wanted to stay in 4th grade." She then added, "All the service and scores that I have provided for the district for years meant absolutely nothing; it is all about butts in the seats." In addition, participants talked about parental disrespect for educators. Violet commented, "There seems to be a breakdown in society and morals." Participants felt as though teaching the difference between right and wrong is something that should be taught at home. These statements were in reference to the *7 Mindsets* curriculum educators were required to implement during the third and fourth quarters of the school year. Teaching students' morals ties into the practicality theme

because teaching *7 Mindsets* is another requirement that takes away from core teaching time. Educators expressed their frustration with what they believe is a lack of parental concern. Tonya, who teaches life skills said, “The most significant stressor I experience is the lack of parental support from my student population.” Participants agree that parent involvement in their children's education has become increasingly rare. Lydia also commented that “many parents simply cannot be bothered.” Tonya, an 18-year veteran teacher, went on to say, “I am skeptical at this point in my career that anything would change or motivate my students’ parents and guardians to place any kind of importance on their child’s education.” Educators feel they are doing all they can to include parents in their child’s education. Lydia said, “I make all my lesson plans available to parents on the Canvas platform and encourage parents to reach out to the curriculum coordinator to gain an understanding of what is involved with the 7 Mindsets curriculum.” The speech language pathologist participants all said they send home a ‘speech folder’ with each student containing materials for students to practice in between speech therapy sessions. Charlotte said, “I become frustrated when my students do not return with their speech folder or return the speech folder without a parent's signature for evidence, they completed the homework” Most participants interpreted (or perceived) the lack of parental support as disrespect toward their professional role.

Professional disrespect was also talked about during the focus group. Jose stated in the focus group, “It is kind of a slap in the face that they (administration) do not value you in the position that you are in.” Participants believe they are treated like a number rather than a person or a professional. Loretta stated, “We (educators) are just a number.” Violet agreed by saying, “We are just a number.” In addition, Jose said, “We take pride in what we do but they make us feel like we are not good enough.” Parental disrespect was also talked about in reference to

demands put on educators by parents and a lack of support given by administration. Focus group participants indicated they believe parents do not respect education or educators as professionals and believe their school administration tends to cater to parental requests in an effort to avoid confrontation or other possible recourse. Jose said, “Let's just say that I feel like sometimes, as educators, we get coerced by the parents or maybe uppers to just cater to what a parent wants.” Loretta expressed her agreement by stating, “It is more about keeping the parents happy and in some cases, it may not even be beneficial to the student.” As an educator, it is important to receive respect from the administration, parents, and legislators in order to have the opportunity to use professional judgement and expertise to meet the individual needs of students while providing the most effective learning environment.

Autocratic Leadership

The sub-theme autocratic leadership is described by the researcher as leadership that does not permit educators to make decisions or provide teacher input. Kurt Lewin, a German American Psychologist, was one of the first to define autocratic leadership. He defined autocratic leadership, also referred to as authoritarian leadership, as the control of an individual over the decisions that impact a group (Nickerson, 2023). Based on participant responses in the survey, educators perceive they are working under autocratic leadership. Participants agreed that policies are put in place to ensure staff and student safety and to establish a system of order. On the survey, Shirley said, “I understand that regulations need to be in place to maintain order in the workplace.” Violet wrote, “Rules are put in place to establish order within a system.” Two participants mentioned that some rules do not apply to everyone. Lydia commented, “Regulations are necessary to operating procedures as long as they are enforced.” Jose said, “It seems like regulations can be broken when it is convenient for others, it is upsetting that

regulations do not apply to all staff or students." When given the ability to make their own decisions, educators realize they are accountable for what may result. Lucy responded to the survey prompt with, "Whether the choice results in a positive or negative result, I love knowing that it was my choice, and I was accountable for what may have resulted. To me, freedom of choice is a form of accountability." Under autocratic leadership, participants acknowledge that most of the time decisions are not theirs to make and they prefer acting on their own free will. Charlotte stated, "I like to make my own choices and do what I think is best." Loretta said, "I like to do me." Tonya also agrees and said, "I value independence and a free-thinking lifestyle, but there has to be some type of purpose or endgame in place. Contentment is a balanced state of mind." Tonya also made the statement, "Most of the time the decisions are not ours to make."

Participants all agreed they do not like to be micromanaged and enjoy being free to make their own decisions and plan their teaching activities. During the interviews, Lila said, "As a teacher, with a classroom full of students, I need to make decisions every moment of every school day." Violet also commented, "Advice that is interjected without experience on the matter, or from someone without a "horse in the race," so to speak, would be annoying, as well as an intrusion." Educators agree that many times those in administration do not have specific knowledge about the decisions they are making. The four speech language pathologist participants also agreed that administration does not understand their profession. Loretta said, "No one else in the district has our background or even understands what we do; therefore, I believe we should be granted the ability to run our speech program the way in which we feel is best for us and our students' growth." Sally said during her interview, "I become frustrated when the decisions I am forced to make are not in the best interest of those it will effect." Participants believed that without the ability to make decisions, they would not be able to do their job with

any certainty. When asked how educators can become more involved in policy making, participants were quick to say administrators could just ask.

During the focus group, participants were asked to share an experience in the school setting when they felt their freedoms were infringed upon. Violet shared, “The freedom to stay in the 4th grade classroom.” She went on to add, “I was ticked off when I had to bid on kindergarten because I wanted to stay in 4th grade.” Jose said, “Having to cater to parents’ requests infringed on her freedom to teach students the way she saw fit.” Loretta and Shirley both stated that their supervisor likes to micromanage their speech programs. Loretta stated, “We have a little more freedom to choose our therapy materials, because there is no set curriculum for speech, but sometimes the special education director likes to micromanage us.” When asked how participants think they can become more involved in policy making, focus group participants said they feel their recommendations fall on deaf ears. Jose said, “They tell you that you have a voice, but then when you voice it and you try to tell them, they give you some reason why they cannot do it, or they tell you ‘Okay’ and never followed up on it.” Loretta agreed by saying, “There is no follow through, they sent out a survey asking what we would like to see in the upcoming contract, but it seems as though none of our requests were addressed.” Autocratic leadership does not allow educators the freedom to use their professional judgment in making decisions or contribute to policy creation leaving educators frustrated.

Educator Compliance

The theme, educator compliance, is described by the researcher as educators complying with policies and regulations despite their personal and professional beliefs. In the survey responses, all of the participants indicated they are typically rule followers. Of the participants, Sally, Lydia, Tonya, and Lucy indicated they would not waiver from their convictions. Sally

stated, “I am inherently a rule follower and am discouraged when others do not follow the rules. I also struggle with not following a rule due to personal beliefs I hold to be true.” Lydia simply stated, “I follow rules.” Two participants said they may think about noncompliance and probably even complain about a policy but would ultimately comply. Loretta said, “Much like people are all talk, I am all thinks. I may think that is exactly what I am going to do but when it comes down to it, I will not act upon it.” Two of the remaining four participants went on to say they would comply but may voice concerns or seek to understand the reasoning behind the policy. Shirley said, “I am typically a rule follower, so I try to implement policies and procedures to the best of my ability and voice concerns if they arise for my population.” Similarly, Lila said, “I prefer to comply with directives from administration and seek to understand the purpose of procedures. If I disagree with something, I have found it most productive to follow my chain of command to present my opinions.” Of the remaining two participants, Charlotte said, “I do not do what is prohibited unless I feel that it is necessary” and Jose said, “I do tend to have a rebellious side. If I am told not to do something, it is kind of a rush to do something I am not supposed to do.”

During individual interviews, participants admitted that in the workplace, they may contemplate not complying and will complain but, in the end, they have no choice, but to comply. When it comes to compliance, Loretta stated, “I talk like a giant, but squeak like a mouse.” Lucy’s statement agrees with Loretta; however, she is convinced that complaining will not bring about change. Lucy stated, “You have to just get out of this mindset that complaining is going to change anything, it is not.” Sally also agreed and added, “You just have to do it, there is no way around it.” In talking about implementing the *7 Mindsets* curriculum, Lydia said, “Initially I was not for it but after I was provided the materials, not necessarily all materials, but the program that I needed to teach, I was able to effectively teach it to the students without

having to take away from another part of my curriculum." Shirley was given a hall duty in the middle of the school year and said, "I did not put much motivation into the task that they were asking me to do because all I was told was to stand out in the hall for a time." When talking about policies in general, Lucy also said, "I often have to breathe as I read the new policies demanded of me. My first instinct is to just ignore. After review, I usually try to figure out a way to implement them, at least partially, in a practical manner." While participants comply with policies they must implement, participants in this study did so with some frustration.

Educator compliance was also addressed during the focus group discussion. Participants were asked why they comply with policies and regulations in spite of not being closely monitored, which was stated in the interviews. Loretta suggested that she was raised to have a good work ethic by stating, "I was taught that you need to follow through and that you do not participate in anything fun until the work is done." Violet added by asking, "Is that my generation or is that our generation because we were raised that way, and would it be different with millennials?" Jose and Shirley, who are millennials, testified that they are compliant. Shirley said, regarding her highly compliant nature, "I am like an old lady; I always say I was born in the wrong time period." Likewise, Jose said," I am not a normal millennial," referring to her high compliance to rules. An additional question was asked to the focus group to determine if they felt they would be more inclined to follow rules in society or in the workplace. Violet affirming her inclination to follow rules in the workplace, stated, "It's my livelihood, so you know you are getting paid for this job. I tend to listen more to, you know, the person that is buttering my bread." Shirley agreed with Violet's workplace compliance statement adding, "You tend to put up with more too." Educator compliance was made evident by participants' responses

on the survey, individual interviews, and the focus group as participants described their personal beliefs regarding compliance with policies and regulations.

Policy Oversight

The sub-theme, policy oversight, is defined by the researcher as the support and oversight educators receive from administration when implementing policies. While most participants were clear that they follow policies, mandates, and regulations when directed, participants seemed unsure of how their implementation of policies was monitored. In the survey responses, participants made mention of teamwork which includes support from administration. Regarding teamwork, Lila stated, “Teamwork truly is the dreamwork.” Shirley, referring to teamwork, commented that “We should all be working for the same goal and building each other up as a team.” Additionally, Lila stated, “I value the support of other educators and knowing I have good leadership to go to when I have questions or need support.” Participants were desirous of policy oversight and support and seemed to perceive these as teamwork.

Policy oversight was talked about by participants during the individual interviews. Charlotte and Tonya both indicated in their interviews that the student learning objectives they must complete yearly initially came with a great deal of oversight but now that several years have passed, no one takes the time to look them over. Tonya noticed the lack of oversight: “It was initially monitored through a building administrator like they would go over and check it with you, talk about it, and make sure you knew if it was going to work for scoring and that kind of stuff. Now, I don't think it is a true measure of progress because there are too many ways that you can fudge that data.” Charlotte said, “Because no one really oversees how you are doing the learning objects any longer, so I do the same one every year and just change the date.” Loretta and Lucy, who talked about mandates put in place during Covid, said that no one checked up on

them to make sure they were wearing masks or enforcing masking policies with their students. However, they both made statements that if they were caught not adhering to mask wearing, they were sure someone would have confronted them. Loretta stated, “While no one specifically came to me personally to make sure I adhered, I am sure that if I was not, I would have been told about it.” Lucy said, “So you know, there were educators who did not comply with this, and they got called on the carpet because, of course, they did a Facebook post, and there were kids without masks.” On the other hand, Sally, who provided an example of policy oversight, talked about a new policy to keep all doors locked, indicated that a security guard walks around the building several times a day to make sure doors are locked. She did not indicate if there were any ramifications if the policy was not being followed. She stated, “Our security guard walks around several times a day.” Violet and Lydia both talked about implementing the *7 Mindsets* program and did not seem to know how they were being monitored. Violet said, “We are not really held accountable. We were asked to keep journals with the students, but I am not going to lie; there is not a whole lot of accountabilities in terms of if we are keeping up with it. I mean, if I wanted to skip it, no one is really looking in on me to see if I am doing it or not.” On the same topic, Lydia said, “When I teach the designated curriculum for the day, it does say ‘in progress,’ so I am assuming somewhere built in that program is something that is monitoring the time that you spend in it or that you have completed it. I have not had to submit anything formal to anyone.”

Policy oversight was also talked about during the focus group discussion. Jose, Loretta, and Shirley, all of whom work under the direction of the special education director said their supervisor does not check in with them. In fact, during the focus group, Loretta said, “I was in the learning support room when the special education director walked in to speak to the learning support teacher. That was the first time I had seen her since November.” Shirley added to the

conversation by saying, “She was in the room next to mine and never came over to see me.” Jose also commented that the only reason the director came to the building that day was to make sure, Jose was working during the extended school year. She stated, “The only reason she stopped in was to make sure I was working her summer program, so she had employees.” Violet, who taught kindergarten this year had this to say about policy oversight, “I don't feel like there is anybody micromanaging kindergarten. I will be honest with you, I feel like first of all, it is not a required grade, so I feel like there is not a lot of emphasis put on it. Nobody checks in on me.” Focus group participants agreed that the policies they were required to implement were not monitored. In addition, focus group participants seemed disappointed in the lack of support they receive from administration.

Outlier Findings

There was one outlier identified in the data collected. Violet was the only participant who admitted she was exercising psychological reactance by purposely not following clear parameters set forth by the school district. As mentioned earlier, Violet taught fourth-grade math and science in the same elementary school for most of her career and was forced to bid on a kindergarten position to stay in that school building. During the focus group, she admitted she was not using the math and reading curriculum with her students that was provided by the district. She said, “I am not doing what I am supposed to be doing. There was a new reading program, a new phonemic awareness program, and four new math curriculums I had to learn, which I found extremely overwhelming. And having been out of that ballpark, because I taught math and science for the last 18 years, I could not handle all that, so I found a curriculum online that works for me.” She continued to say that she is a rule follower but when she feels overwhelmed, she needs to do what works best for her. She concluded her statement by saying,

“It is not what I am supposed to be doing, but it is my way of coping, and my kids are learning.” The other nine participants held firm to their beliefs, that they follow all rules, policies, or mandates they are given to implement. Many indicated they would express their concerns or possibly complain to others, but in the end they would comply.

Research Question Responses

Qualitative research questions should be unrestricted, developing, and aid in capturing the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The central research question in phenomenology explores a lived experience and the sub-questions enable researchers to break the central research question down into specific areas of investigation and, in phenomenology, may aid in capturing the essence of the study (Peoples, 2020). Therefore, the central research questions and sub-questions were created to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators as they are required to implement policies created by legislators and other stakeholders in which they may not be involved in creating to describing their experiences, and perceptions about recent policies. In addition, the central research question also describes the perceived influence their experiences have had on their well-being, and the affects their experiences has had on psychological reactance and resilience. The research questions are answered using the themes that emerged from the study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates sent down from policymakers and other stakeholders? Three main themes emerged from the data analysis describing the lived experiences of educators: the practicality of policies, professional disrespect for educators, and policy compliance to which educators adhere. The practicality of policies theme describes how policies increase their workload, especially for those

in special education. During the interview, Sally commented, “Special education policies have created more paperwork which deters me from being able to plan and implement good lessons.” Participants then expressed that some policies they are asked to implement cause repetitive actions. Eight participants reported the policies they recently had to implement were tasks they were already completing, however, maybe not to the specifics of the policy. Tonya, Loretta, Sally, Jose, Shirley, and Charlotte were already taking data on their students when they were asked to implement a student learning objective policy and Violet was already teaching her students social-emotional learning when asked to implement *7 Mindsets*. These participants were required to complete extra paperwork or an extra lesson in order to meet the requirements of the policy they were required to implement.

Educators in this study also shared their feelings about not being respected in the teaching profession by the administration and parents. Jose and Shirley were assigned duties requiring them to monitor students at the end of the day in their buildings, and both suggested that the administration just needed anyone to monitor the students, ignoring the need for the participants to complete the paperwork required for their specific positions. During the interview, Jose said, “It made me feel like they just need a body to cover an area; that is kind of how I feel because they really did not take into account, the teacher-to-student ratio.” Other participants described how they have witnessed administration catering to parent requests and not allowing them as professionals to use their discretion. Loretta was quoted in the focus group as saying, “I feel like with the accommodations, it seems like your opinion as an educator, or your educational background is not valued.” Participants felt like they were working with autocratic leadership and that they were not asked to provide input about decisions being made that directly impacted

them. Sally summed it up, in the interview, by saying, “I mean, you just have to do it. There is no way around it.”

Educators participating in this study indicated they conform to policies and rules put in place not only within their profession but in society in general. Tonya wrote in her survey, “I am a rule follower. I do not or have never been the person who likes going against the establishment.” In the survey educators also revealed they do not like being forced to do something. Jose wrote on her survey, “I do not like having my hand forced.” Charlotte, Shirley, Lydia, and Sally all wrote, “It depends on the situation.” Individual interviews revealed that educators observed a lack of oversight from the administration in making sure they are following through with the implementation of policies and mandates as directed. Despite the lack of oversight, participants indicated they would still comply. The lack of oversight is accompanied by participants' disappointment with the amount of support they feel they receive from the administration. During the interview when asked what participants felt caused the most significant stress, Shirley said, “No support from administration. You are basically left to sink in most cases.”

Sub-Question One

What are K-5 educators’ perceptions about recent policies they have been required to implement? Some participants in this study struggled to provide a policy they were recently required to implement. Lila stated, “Nothing stands out that I oppose as far as any of the policies.” Eight participants were able to provide an example of a policy they recently implemented; however, four of these eight were unsure if their response qualified as a policy. Sally asked, “Would the fact that our doors are always locked, and I can't get into anybody's room easily be a policy?” Charlotte asked, “Like student learning objectives, you mean like stuff

like that?" Two participants provided a policy adopted by their school district nine years ago. During the interview, Tonya stated, "The most recent one that pertains to what we're talking about here would be the student learning objectives or the SLO. That's the most recent one I've had to implement."

The theme of the practicality of policy was the focus of educators' perceptions about recent policies they were required to implement. Participants' perceptions were addressed through the sub-theme of excessive workload. Educators reported that the workload and repetition these policies have created have caused feelings of frustration and anxiety. In the interview, Lucy stated, "When you put all of those things together in a day, where you already don't have enough time, it was very frustrating. So, it led to burnout for me in a lot of ways." In addition, Shirley discussed her feelings of apathy because she was asked to perform a duty that anyone could have done and when her duty was complete, she said, "I would have to rush back to my room and complete my required paperwork for the day."

A few participants were able to provide a positive perspective. Lydia discussed how implementing *7 Mindsets* with her students has led to a more positive disposition for her in addition to educating the students to be more mindful, she stated, "It actually helps me be more positive myself. It not only educated the students but the adults as well." When talking about policies implemented during Covid, that led to online speech therapy, Loretta mentioned, in her interview, "I was able to build a better relationship with parents and saw significant growth in my students' speech skills." In addition, all 10 participants mentioned their appreciation for their colleagues and the comradery they shared. During the interview and again in the focus group discussion, Jose made the following comment about the duty she performs at the end of the school day, which requires her to keep the entire student body in the cafeteria until dismissal,

“Thank goodness for my paraprofessional; she is supposed to leave at 3:00 and she voluntarily stays even when she is not supposed to because she feels bad leaving me alone because the other specials were pulled to substitute.” Participants in this study provided both positive and negative perceptions regarding recent policies they were required to implement. On the one hand, implementation created feelings of anxiety and frustration, and on the other, participants shared feelings of comradery with colleagues.

Sub-Question Two

How do K-5 educators describe the influence that implementing policy has on their well-being? Participants overall did not believe implementing a policy had any influence on their well-being. Three participants said that the implementation of a recent policy has not had an impact on their well-being. During the interview, Lila stated, “I don't know that it has impacted my health or well-being. I think my job in general can sometimes affect well-being because it can be stressful.” Tonya said, “I don't know if it's really had anything on my well-being.” Seven participants mentioned an increase of stress or anxiety but also indicated there was no influence on their well-being. During her interview, Violet stated, “I just feel like it is just added stress that really is unnecessary when we should be concentrating on other things in the classroom.” When talking about student learning objectives in her interview, Charlotte said, “Well, it stresses me out whenever it is due and it makes extra work, but I wouldn't say it is actually making me like, sick.” During the interview, when talking about the policy of keeping all doors locked in the school, Sally said, “At least I have not been injured by a student.” She went on to indicate that she received special permission for her door to remain unlocked due to the degree of disability of many of her students. In the interview, when talking about the policies she needed to implement during Covid, Lucy said, “I was extremely stressed and experienced feelings of guilt. I felt it was

my responsibility to pull the kids up speech-wise and social-wise even though I knew that the mask issue was the problem at hand." Overall, participants did not feel implementing policies had any effect on their well-being, however, participants all mentioned experiencing feelings of stress and anxiety.

Sub-Question Three

How do K-5 educators describe the influence psychological reactance has when obligated to implement policies beyond their control? Three participants indicated psychological reactance did not have an influence on their implementation of a policy. During her interview, Lucy said, "I did not feel like my psychological reactance brought in any negativity whatsoever." Another three participants discussed how policy implementation was stressful or made them angry and frustrated but said they did not respond with any psychological reactance. Sally said during her interview, "If they are ones that go against my beliefs, then it does make my blood pressure go up, makes my blood boil. But I have not had to do anything against my thoughts. It is just more of an annoyance and extra step" and Charlotte said, "It makes me feel a little stressed out and sometimes a little angry because it's like we already have all this stuff to do, and now there is one more thing on top of it because they do not take things to do away, they just add on." Only the remaining four participants were able to provide a hint of psychological reactance. During the interview, Loretta shared, "I believe I should be able to run my speech program the way I believe would have the best outcomes for my students." Lydia commented, during her interview, that when implementing *7 Mindsets*, "I was not initially for it," but she did not indicate any further psychological reactance. When talking about implementing student learning objectives in her interview, Tonya said, "It was kind of insulting and gave everyone a bad attitude." Finally, when describing the effects implementing policies has had on psychological reactance, Violet said

during her interview, “Psychologically, the burnout kicks in and then psychologically you just want to shut down and throw in the towel.” While participants did indicate they became frustrated and angry, overall, they did not feel psychological reactance caused them to do anything to regain lost freedom.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter Four was to share themes that emerged from the data to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. Participants were chosen from the researcher’s personal contacts and met the criteria for participation. The 10 participants completed an open-ended survey and individual interview. In addition, four participants were chosen by the researcher to participate in a focus group. The research data was analyzed using a hermeneutic phenomenological design to determine thematic discoveries (Dibley, 2020). Three major themes were uncovered that provide an understanding of K-5 educators’ experiences: policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and educator compliance. Each of the three themes also included sub-themes that emerged during data analysis including excessive workload, autocratic leadership, and policy oversight.

Policy impracticality was the first theme discussed. Policy impracticality is described by the researcher as a policy that involves repetitive extra work. This repetitive extra work was found to have an impact on how educators view policy impracticality. Participants described feelings of frustration, anger, and resentment when faced with implementing policies they felt were not practical. Participants also stated that policies that serve the best interest of students while not creating extra work for educators were more likely to be viewed as practical. In

addition, participants agree that administration can do a better job managing policy impracticality. The sub-theme, excessive workload arose from the policy impracticality theme. The researcher defined excessive workload as work that educators are not able to complete during regular contract hours. Many participants discussed taking work home or staying late to complete work without additional compensation leading to added frustration and stress.

The second theme, professional disrespect, refers to the lack of ability educators are afforded to use their professional judgment and expertise in the classroom due to outspoken parents and autocratic leaders. In addition, educators feel there is a lack of parental involvement in their child's education and a lack of teaching in the home. Participants believe a parent's participation in their child's education demonstrates a certain amount of respect for educator and the education process. In addition, participants believe professional respect may provide educators with the opportunity to better meet the needs of their students. Professional respect is difficult to obtain when working under autocratic leadership. Autocratic leadership is the sub-theme of professional disrespect. Under autocratic leadership, educators are unable to make decisions or provide input into policy creation (Nickerson, 2023). Autocratic leadership stifles creativity and opportunities to provide students with the most effective learning environment. In addition, participants in this study expressed feelings of frustration while working under autocratic leadership.

Educator compliance was the third theme generated from the data. The researcher described educator compliance as educators who comply with policies despite their personal beliefs. Participants in this study implement policies to the best of their ability and follow administration policies. Participants discussed frustration, stress, and anxiety that accompanies compliance. Participants agreed that despite a lack of oversight throughout policy

implementation, educators remain within policy parameters when implementing policies. The sub-theme of policy oversight emerged from educator compliance. Policy oversight is referred to by the researcher as the support educators receive from school administration. Participants in this study expressed a desire for more administrative support and were disappointed in the amount of support they actually received from administration. Policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and educator compliance themes provided comprehensive answers to the central research question and three sub-questions presented in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. Chapter Five provides an in-depth review and discussion of research discoveries focusing on their implications for application. An interpretation of the findings, implications of policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research are included in this chapter. Chapter Five is concluded with a summary of the research study.

Discussion

In this section, theoretical findings derived from the themes that emerged during data analysis are discussed. There were three central themes, policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and educator compliance. Three sub-themes emerged from the central themes. From policy impracticality came the sub-theme of excessive workload, from the professional disrespect theme came the sub-theme of autocratic leadership, and from the educator compliance theme came the sub-theme of policy oversight. The findings from the research were based on the theoretical framework of Brehm's theory of psychological reactance theory (1966) and the hermeneutic phenomenological research design written by Moustakas (1994). There were three implications derived from the themes and sub-themes: thought suppression, policy distinction, and acquiescence. The study found that educators have a desire for their professional judgment and expertise to be utilized throughout policy creation and implementation and want educational policies that are beneficial to students as well as practical for educators.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. Educators' experiences were acquired using Hong's Psychological Reactance Survey, semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group. In order to attain data saturation and understand educators' experiences, 10, K-5 educators, chosen from the researcher's contacts accepted the invitation to participate. Following data collection and analysis, three main themes and three sub-themes emerged. The main themes include policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and teacher compliance. The sub-themes were excessive workload, autocratic leadership, and policy oversight.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The researcher discovered three major themes that offer an understanding of K-5 educators' experiences implementing policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies. Themes include policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and educator compliance. Sub-themes were identified for each of the themes and emerged during data analysis. These sub-themes include excessive workload, autocratic leadership, and policy oversight. Participants expressed their desire for educational policies to be beneficial to students while being practical for all involved without increasing educator workload. In addition, participants in this study felt as though they were not always respected as a professional by their administration and parents. Lack of respect left participants believing they are not able to use their professional judgment and expertise which

they believe could be beneficial to their students. Lastly, participants in this study stated they are compliant with all policies and mandates they are given by their administration to implement and that these policies and mandates are implemented to the best of their ability. Participants' experiences produced three researcher interpretations: thought suppression, policy distinction, and acquiescence.

Thought Suppression. Thought suppression in psychology occurs when a person consciously tries to avoid certain thoughts (Rassin, 2000). During data collection, what teachers were *not* saying stood out to me. Throughout the individual interviews, only two of the 10 participants mentioned recent mandates and policies centered around Covid. From 2020 to 2023, our students, teachers, and other school staff, were significantly impacted by policies, mandates, and directives relayed to them by lawmakers and others of authority (Pennsylvania Department of Education, n.d.). These policies, mandates, and directives were strict and strictly enforced, however, teachers did not mention these restrictions. In addition, when Covid was mentioned to participants, most did not discuss or elaborate on the topic. Wallaert et al. (2023) conducted a study referred to as "Taming the White Bear." Results from their study indicated that when told or given permission to think about forbidden thoughts, participants engaged in psychological reactance by doing the opposite. The results of this study align with those of Wallaert et al. (2023) because when participants were reminded of Covid mandates in education they did not discuss the topic.

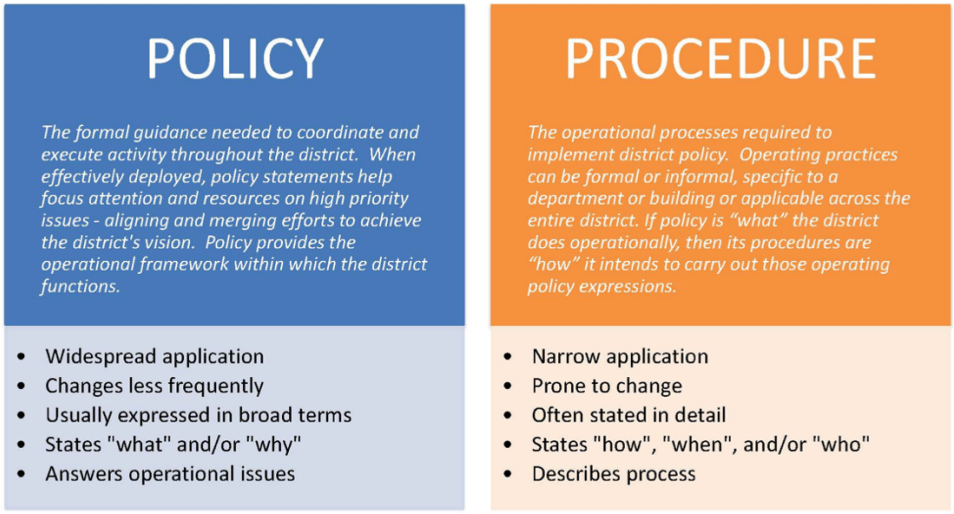
My interpretation of these findings was that educators, either due to their personality traits or a rebound of behavior, engaged in thought suppression related to policies and mandates they were required to implement. Thought suppression was made evident as participants in this study struggled to provide a policy they were recently required to implement. Lila stated,

“Nothing stands out that I oppose as far as any of the policies.” In addition, during the interview, Charlotte asked, “Like student learning objectives, you mean like stuff like that?” Participant statements made it clear they were struggling to recall policies brought on by Covid. This research did not attempt to identify educators' personality traits, nor how personality traits are related to thought suppression. Furthermore, other research has not been able to produce significant results regarding the possible correlation between personality traits and thought suppression (Kell, 2019).

Policy Distinction. What constitutes a policy? Policies are an agenda, or an officially agreed-upon set of ideas produced by a group of people, usually politicians, that are to be followed in specific situations (Lewis et al., 2019). Throughout data collection and analysis for this research, participants appeared unsure of what actually constitutes a policy. During the interview, Sally asked, “Would the fact that our doors are always locked, and I can't get into anybody's room easily be a policy?” Charlotte asked during her interview, “Like student learning objectives, you mean like stuff like that?” Policy characteristics differ from procedure characteristics (*Is It a Policy, Procedure, or Guideline,* 2022) A policy is a framework, and a procedure is how a policy is executed (*Policy Vs. Procedure | Student Engagement Project | Nebraska*, n.d.) (See Figure 5).

Figure 5

School District Policy & Procedures Defined



Note: Adopted from Policy Vs. Procedure | Student Engagement Project | Nebraska, n.d.

My interpretation of these findings revealed that educators may not be as frustrated with policies they are required to implement as much as they may be frustrated with the procedures necessary for implementation. Frustration with procedures relates to the policy impracticality theme and excessive workload sub-theme. Responses to the survey in addition to individual interviews and the focus group revealed resentment when educators were required to implement policies they did not believe to be practical. This impracticality was rooted in policies educators did not believe were beneficial to all involved and that created repetitive extra work. During her interview, Lucy said, "Policies are often put in place by people who have no clue how impractical, and often impossible, the practices are." During the focus group, Violet said, "Sounds like a good idea, but it is like theory, you know like it sounds good in theory, but does it work practically?" The statements conveyed by the participants revealed that they find the procedures to be more of a nuisance than the policies themselves.

Acquiescence. According to significant theories in psychology, individuals possess an innate longing for feelings that are the opposite of submission (Pittman & Zeigler, 2007).

Brehm's theory of psychological reactance states that reactance is an emotional state people encounter when they feel outside influences and incongruous rules threaten their freedom (Brehm, 1966). However, at times, social submission may occur. This submission happens when an individual gives direct control over her own behavior to another person and may limit their personal control in exchange for financial gain (Ecker et al., 2021). Acquiescence was described by the American Psychological Association as accepting something without resistance (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*, n.d.). During a review of the research data, participants revealed through survey responses, interview answers, and the focus group discussion that they are acquiescent to policies, rules, mandates, and regulations regardless of feelings of psychological reactance. Acquiescence connects with the theme of educator compliance and the sub-theme of policy oversight. Throughout the interviews, teachers said that even though adherence to policies was not strictly monitored, they followed through with policy implementation. In her survey response, Lydia simply stated, "I follow the rules." In her interview, Sally made the comment, "You just have to do it, there is no way around it." The concept of acquiescence as an interpretation prompted the question, "Were participants being truthful with their responses?" One participant admitted she was purposely not following clear parameters set forth by the school district. This admission was not done in her survey responses or individual interview. The admission took place in the midst of the focus group where she stated, "I am not doing what I am supposed to be doing. There was a new reading program, a new phonemic awareness program, and four new math curriculums I had to learn, which I found extremely overwhelming." In addition, she said, "It is not what I am supposed to be doing, but it is my way of coping, and my kids are learning." This concept refers back to my interpretation of thought suppression. Do educators yield to the implementation of policies due to their personality traits or do educators

actually not follow or tweak policies to make them practical? Do educators comply with the administration simply because they trust them? After all, without trust, institutions cannot function effectively (Gustafsson et al., 2020).

Implications for Policy and Practice

Through examination of participant data in this study, the following section outlines various recommendations for policy and practice. The implications of policy pertain to legislators and other stakeholders who design policy for educators (Shieh, 2021). The following recommendations are intended to improve the practicality of policy implementation and enforcement for educators. The implications for practice pertain to the school district administration in regard to the amount and type of support given to educators as they implement policies.

Implications for Policy

The implications for policy derived from the findings of this study pertain to legislators who design policy for educators. In education, policies are formed by federal, state, and local governments (Xq, 2022). Often educational policies rely on research that studies the effectiveness of policies using a random sample design with the anticipation of providing generalization (Penuel, 2016). There is an abundance of research demonstrating that educator interpretations of policies directly affect policy implementation (Bertrand & March, 2015; Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2016; Cho & Wayman, 2014; Coburn, 2001; Hill, 2001; Louis et al., 2005; Spillane et al., 2002). Policy implementation is a complex undertaking that requires weaving around obstructions. Policy implementation requires instruments, resources, and interactions that connect policy to action (Seraw & Xinihi, 2020). Cohen et al. (2020) and Fixsen et al. (2015) stated that evidence-based research shows that policies that seem to be designed

well succeed in small pilot implementation but when implemented on a larger scale do not result in the success policymakers had hoped. Policymakers must remember that educators are the key actors in policy implementation and must understand all aspects of the proposed policy (Pizmony-Levy & Woolsey, 2017).

Based on participant responses, the researcher recommends that legislators and other stakeholders who are creating policies refer to educator experience and professional judgment throughout the creation of policy. Doing so may prevent policies from becoming cumbersome to educators and may bring forth a higher quality of instruction to students. Good et al. (2017) documented in their research that educators' lack of envisioning themselves as a professional directly affects how they view their legitimacy in influencing educational policy.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study resulted in propositions for practice for school district administration in regard to the amount and type of support given to educators as they implement policies. First, educators need to be supported to advocate for themselves when faced with implementing policies they did not assist in creating. During the interview when asked about the impact implementing policy has on job satisfaction, Lila stated, “When you feel supported, it makes a big difference.” Building principals may not have direct interaction with students in the classroom, however, they have an indirect impact through their interactions with the educators of their schools (Cohen, 2020; Hattie, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Second, educators need an outlet to freely voice their opinions. Lucy stated when talking about her involvement in Teach Plus, a program that selects educators to represent teachers, “This program gives teachers a voice and informs legislators what real teachers need instead of having administrators per se making policy.” During the interview, when asked how teachers can

be more active in policymaking, Jose stated, “It would be nice if they ask our opinion before creating a policy. I mean, maybe actually come into a classroom and see what happens instead of just assuming that you know how everything operates.” Educators want a platform to express their opinions without any restrictions.

The third implication for practice identified through the research data was to permit educators time to pilot a policy and provide feedback for change. During the interview, Shirley recommended piloting policies before implementation by stating, “We should trial them maybe in the classroom before actually going through and implementing the policy change to make sure it works for the well-being of the students and everyone who is involved.” This feedback loop may not always be appropriate for all policies and situations. Policymakers, administrators, and other stakeholders may not wish to provide a feedback loop for all policies they create. However, educators need to feel that their professional feedback is important and taken into consideration.

Finally, educators should be permitted to use their professional judgment and expertise to make small alterations and adjustments to policies in order to make the policy practical. Many of the participants in this study took the initiative to make alterations and adjustments despite what they are told. Shirley stated in her survey response, “I try to implement policies and procedures to the best of my ability.” Lucy stated in her interview, “I usually try to figure out a way to implement them at least partially in a practical manner.” Permitting educators to make adjustments as needed in the classroom may take away some of the stress and anxiety educators experience because they would not feel the need to conceal the changes they execute.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

My research was grounded in Brehm's psychological reactance theory; an emotional state people encounter when they feel their freedom has been threatened by outside influences and

incongruous rules (Brehm, 1966). Brehm's theory contains four prominent elements; perceived freedom, a threat to freedom, reactance, and restoration of freedom (Steindl et al., 2015). The themes identified in this research confirm and challenge the elements of Brehm's psychological reactance theory. The elements of perceived freedom and a threat to freedom were confirmed however, reactance and restoration of freedom were challenged. The theoretical value of my study helps to close the gap in the literature for research regarding recent policies and mandates and how they have affected educators' freedoms in the classroom and interaction with other staff and students. The themes resulting from my research were unable to provide a clear confirmation of Brehm's psychological reactance theory in regard to educators' infringement of freedoms through educational policies. While it was clear that educators participating in this study experience perceived freedoms and a threat to those freedoms, educators in this study did not provide clear reactance nor did they seek to restore their lost freedoms.

There is limited research on teacher psychological reactance, particularly in educational policy enactment. Reactance carries behavioral, emotional, and cognitive effects that educators are not immune to. The empirical implications of this study indicate using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach added to the literature concerning the understanding of educators' lived experiences implementing educational policies that legislators and other stakeholders have transmitted without validation. My results coincide with the literature that educators underrate how they are perceived (Everton et al., 2007). In addition, participants in this research also agreed with the literature that educators have a predominant feeling of being left out when it comes to policymaking (Shieh, 2021b). Finally, the results from my research coincide with the research of Pishghadam (2022) and Trinidad (2019) who indicated that psychological reactance could look different between individuals and that there is no possible method to understand how

an individual will react when their freedoms are at stake. The results of this study contribute to the literature by raising awareness of educators' perspectives on the educational policies they must implement bringing attention to their unique perspective on the needs of the students and communities they serve.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations and delimitations affect all research. Limitations are constraints placed on research based on your research methodology and design, which the researcher cannot control. Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher sets in their study and are elements that limit the research results from being generalized to all people (Miles, 2019: Peoples, 2020). This study's results were affected by limitations and delimitations.

Limitations

The researcher recognized several limitations or potential weaknesses in the methodology that were out of the researcher's control (Miles, 2019). The first limitation was in the participant sample. This study only included female participants who met the requirements and were willing to participate. Understanding how male and female educators perceive implementing policies required by policymakers may reveal a difference in perceptions and psychological reactance. Although I used pseudonyms and removed any demographics or identifiable characteristics to ensure participant confidentiality, a second limitation was that I assumed all participant responses to be truthful.

Delimitations

There were several delimitation factors chosen for this study. First, criterion purposive sampling was used which limits the participant requirements and the geographical range which affects generalization (Miles, 2019). Participants were chosen from the researcher's personal

contacts in school districts in western Pennsylvania. Participants were limited to only K-5 educators with a minimum of three years of teaching experience who experience some degree of self-reported frustration with educational policies. The second delimitation was the specificity of the individual interview questions in which giving participants a specific policy to focus on may have yielded different results.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings, limitations, and delimitations of this study, several recommendations for future research have been made. Future research should include a mixture of male and female participants. Examining the perspectives of male and female educators regarding the implementation of policies mandated by policymakers may uncover variations in their perceptions and psychological responses. In addition, this study had several delimitations which should be addressed in future research. The first delimitation should address participants from different geographical locations or educational backgrounds. Expanding the geographical location of participants would allow researchers to gather information from school districts of various sizes with the possibility of different forms of administration providing a deeper insight into educator experiences. The third recommendation for future research may involve the perceptions of administration, such as building principals when they receive policies that they must require their educators to implement. A study focused on principals would better understand the extent to which school administrators experience psychological reactance. Finally, conducting a transcendental phenomenological study may increase the validity of the results. A transcendental phenomenological study may be able to describe the lived experience of educators who were required to implement policies, without bias from the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders, who were not required to implement such policies. In order to understand educator experiences, the following central research question guided this study: What are the lived experiences of K-5 educators required to implement policies and mandates created by policymakers and other stakeholders? In addition, three sub-questions were formulated to investigate specific areas of the phenomenon, including educator perceptions of educational policies, the impact implementing policy has had on educator well-being, and the influence of psychological reactance. A literature review was performed and included an examination of Brehm's Psychological Reactance Theory, the theoretical framework which guided this research and was used to analyze the results and interpret collected data. A phenomenological research design was used to collect data concerning the lived experiences of K-5 educators in a school district in western Pennsylvania. Data sources for this research included The Hong Psychological Reactance Scale-Revised (HPRS) in the form of open-ended questions, individual semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. Analysis of the data was performed through triangulation and thematic saturation. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation, peer review, member checks, and transferability. Data analysis revealed themes including policy impracticality, professional disrespect, and educator compliance. The results of this study revealed educators have a desire for educational policies to be beneficial to students while being practical to educators. In addition, educators have a desire for their professional judgment and expertise to be utilized throughout policy creation and implementation.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

Date: 6-22-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-754
Title: Understanding Psychological Reactance in K-5 Public School Teachers: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study
Creation Date: 12-19-2022
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Kimberlee Sproul
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial	Review Type Limited	Decision Exempt - Limited IRB

Key Study Contacts

Member Andrea Bruce	Role Co-Principal Investigator	Contact [redacted]
Member Kimberlee Sproul	Role Principal Investigator	Contact [redacted]
Member Kimberlee Sproul	Role Primary Contact	Contact [redacted]

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title of the Project: Understanding Psychological Reactance in K-5 Public School Educators: A Hermeneutical, Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator:
Kimberlee Sproul, Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a licensed to teach K-5 with a minimum of three years of teaching experience and have encountered some degree of frustration. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policy makers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you consent to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Complete an open-ended survey independently providing a rich and thick reflection of at least two sentences Completion of the Hong Psychological Reactance is expected to take participants approximately 30 minutes to complete. This will take about 30 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in a one-on-one interview, which will be conducted via the videoconferencing platform Microsoft Teams. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. If you choose to participate it, will be audio and video recorded by the platform and audio backup recorded for the use of transcription.
3. Participants may be contacted to participate in a focus group, conducted via the videoconferencing platform Microsoft Teams. The focus group discussion will take approximately 90 minutes. If you choose to participate it, will be audio and video recorded by the platform and audio backup recorded for the use of transcription.
4. Verify your data (member checking). After each of the above data collections, you will be asked to review your responses in order to verify your intended meaning. This should take about 15-30 minutes in total.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

This study may provide practical significance for educators, administrators, legislators, and other educational stakeholders raising awareness of how educators perceive the educational

policies they are required to implement while calling attention to their unique perspective on the needs of the students and communities they serve.

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 records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms.
- The researcher will conduct the virtual interviews in a room with a door that can be shut so that conversation will not be overheard.
- All audio and video files will be kept in a locked fireproof box, and all digital data will be kept on a password locked personal computer. After three years, all hard copies of data will be deleted, and all digital records will also be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The recording will be stored on a password locked personal computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kimberlee Sproul. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [redacted] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Andrea Bruce, at [redacted]

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, 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 and video record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix C: Hong Psychological Reactance Scale

Instructions: Below you will find a series of items. Based on the prompt on the left, please provide a minimum of two complete sentences about how you relate to the item using the "Participant Open-Ended Response" boxes on the right

HPRS Open-Ended Questions	Participants' Open-Ended Responses
1. Regulations trigger a sense of resistance in me.	
2. I find contradicting others stimulating.	
3. When something is prohibited, I usually think, "That is exactly what I am going to do."	
4. The thought of being dependent on others aggravates me.	
5. I consider advice from others to be an intrusion.	
6. I become frustrated when I am unable to make free and independent decisions.	
7. It irritates me when someone points out things that are obvious to me.	
8. I become angry when my freedom of choice is restricted.	
9. Advice and recommendations usually induce me to do just the opposite.	
10. I am contented only when I am acting of my own free will.	

11. I resist the attempts of others to influence me.	
12. It makes me angry when another person is held up as a role model for me to follow.	
13. When someone forces me to do something, I feel like doing the opposite.	
14. It disappoints me to see others submitting to society's standards and rules.	

Emotional response toward restricted choice (4, 6, 7, 8) Reactance to compliance (1, 2, 3, 14) Resisting influence from others (10,11,12,13) Reactance to advice and recommendations (5, 9)

Note: From "Refinement of the Hong Psychological Reactance Scale," by S. M. Hong and S. Faedda, 1996, Educational & Psychological Measurement, 56, p. 177, Copyright© by Sage Publications. Reprinted by Permission of Sage.

Appendix D: Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself as though this is your first time meeting me.
2. Please explain your experience as a K-5 teacher.
3. What do you enjoy the most about teaching?
4. What recent education policies have you had to implement?
5. From where do you believe this policy originated?
6. How were you given the directive to carry out the policy?
7. How was your adherence to the policy monitored?
8. What was your experience implementing the policy?
9. If implementing the policy required cooperation from students or parents, how did they respond to the policy?
10. How has the policy impacted your view of education?
11. In what ways could educators have a more active role in policymaking at the district, state, or federal level?
12. Explain the impact implementing the policy has had on your health and well-being.
13. Explain the impact implementing the policy has had on job satisfaction and/or burnout.
14. Given the definition of psychological reactance, how would you describe the effects implementing policies has had on your psychological reactance?

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to the group.
2. Please share an experience in the school environment when you felt your freedoms may be infringed upon.
3. Please share your reaction when you felt your freedoms may be infringed upon.
4. Please share a recent experience you had implementing a policy or mandate.
5. Tell about any positive results from implementing the policy or mandate.
6. Tell about any negative results from implementing the policy or mandate.
7. Thinking back over the past two years, share how you believe your overall well-being has been affected by school policies and mandates.
8. Please share any ideas you may have to get educators more involved in policy creation.
9. Compare and contrast your views of educational policies verses general society policies.
10. Why do you feel this way?
11. Is there anything further you would like to share with the group?

Appendix F: Recruitment Email

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting qualitative research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences of K-5 educators who have been required to implement the continual transmission of policies and mandates created by policy makers and other stakeholders, who are not required to implement such policies.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and have taught for at least three years. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete an online survey regarding feedback reflection, an individual online interview, and member checking after completion. (Please note that it is possible that a follow-up interview may occur if additional clarification is needed.). In total, it should take approximately three hours to complete the above items. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research study. To participate, please reply to this email with your signed consent document. After I receive your consent form, I will email you with the survey link and directions.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you would know of anyone else who could be interested in participating. Thank you for considering participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Kimberlee Sproul
Ph.D. Candidate
[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix G: Participant Demographics

Educator Participant	Years Taught	Number of Years in K-5	Current Grade Level	Certification
Charlette	10	10	K-8	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Jose	10	10	K-5 Supplemental Learning Support	PA Elementary K-6 PA Special Education K-12
Lila	11	8	K-5	PA Private School - Teacher Nursery/Kindergarten N-K PA Private School - Teacher Soc and Emotionally Disturbed K-12
Loretta	16	16	K-12	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Lucy	33	14	Pre-K	PA Elementary K-6 PA Private School - Teacher Nursery/Kindergarten N-K
Lydia	17	11	6th	PA Elementary K-6 Mid-Level Science 6-9
Sally	10	10	K-8	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Shirley	20	20	K-6	Speech & Language Impaired PK-12
Tonya	18	10	9^{th}-12^{th} Supplemental Learning Support	Special Education N-12 Middle Level Social Studies
Violet	27	27	Kindergarten	PA Elementary K-6 Program Specialist English as a Second Language (ESL) PK-12