EXPLORING LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SELF-EFFICACY: THE

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NOVICE TEACHERS

by

Lauryn Elizabeth Stripling

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

This phenomenological study aimed to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers at a southern Georgia school district. At this stage in the research, the retention influence of leadership support was generally defined as the systems available to novice teachers that raise levels of morality and motivation, influencing new teachers to continue in the education field (Burns, 1978). Bandura's social cognitive theory guided the exploration of novice teacher retention relating to leadership system support. The investigation was guided by sub-questions that delve into self-efficacy, novice teachers' attitudes, and social norms. Participants were teachers with no more than five years of experience in a southeastern United States school district. The data collection process included individual interviews, a focus group, and journal writing. Data analysis for this study followed van Manen (1994) to highlight the lived experiences of novice teachers. The results yielded essential findings. Novice teachers need quality support not only from leadership but also in the form of professional development. Relationships are an integral part of novice teachers' success and retention. The working environment in which novice teachers work daily matters and sets the tone for how they approach their work. Lastly, much of the necessary pieces to retain novice teachers flow from the top down; it all begins with leadership. Leadership plays an integral role in novice teacher retention.

Keywords: novice teachers, self-efficacy, teacher retention, leadership

Copyright Page

Dedication

To the principal who saw more in me than I ever saw in myself, Dr. Zeda L. George, this dissertation is dedicated to you. You are so much of who I hope to be when I grow into this title. You have molded me and shaped me into the leader I am becoming, and you were instrumental in the endeavor of this dissertation. Thank you for your leadership and continued influence on my professional and personal life.

Secondly, this is dedicated to everyone who said I could not and would not accomplish this. You pushed me to higher heights and motivated me beyond words. I did it!

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I want first to acknowledge my Lord and Savior; without Him, I would not have been able to accomplish this and would not have landed at Liberty to complete this degree. Secondly, to my chair, Dr. Strafaccia, and my committee, Dr. Vacchi, thank you both for your guidance and encouragement throughout this process. You both are truly amazing.

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To my participants, thank you. This would not have been possible without you all. Thank you for your honesty and willingness to share your heart with me. You are seen, heard, and appreciated more than you know. Your work is not in vain; I believe each of you will one day change the world.

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List of Abbreviations

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)

Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Novice teachers face many challenges when transitioning from student to educator. Teachers are often met with various challenges, especially in the beginning years, that require even the newest educators to maintain classroom routings, differentiate curriculum, communicate with family members of students, and develop collegial relationships among peers (Gholam, 2018). This study will explore the lived experiences of novice teachers, the struggles they faced in their beginning years, how they overcame those challenges, and what supports were most beneficial to their success. To begin, this chapter will explore the problem, the purpose, and the background information on novice teacher retention for this study.

Background

Teacher retention has become an ever-increasing problem, with the need to focus on student and teacher success (Papay & Kraft, 2016; Zavelevsky et al., 2022). As a result, school districts have faced an uphill climb in recruiting and retaining quality teachers amidst a growing teacher shortage (Papay & Kraft, 2016). To examine this problem, scholars have used a variety of theories to understand teacher retention. A further examination of the historical, social, and theoretical contexts will focus on novice teacher experiences.

Historical Context

Retention of novice and experienced teachers has posed a significant challenge in staffing schools over the last 40 years (Papay & Kraft, 2016). Roughly 120,000 openings for teaching positions at only the elementary level each year are expected, with many of these openings resulting from a need to replace those who chose to change jobs or leave the teaching profession (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2022). Through exploring this problem, researchers have

historically examined teacher self-efficacy regarding novice teachers' performance within schools (Whalen et al., 2019). While stability and retention remain problematic throughout the years, improving educator self-efficacy may guide teacher retention due to increased confidence and trust in teaching abilities (Bandura, 1994; Cansoy & Parlar, 2018). Maintaining a robust and stable workforce of teachers is a continuing problem for schools in the United States (Ford et al., 2019). Surprisingly, administrative support is historically cited as a critical factor in teacher attrition; however, researchers still need to examine supporting teachers' extensive needs even though student needs have often been the subject of scholarly research (Ford et al., 2019). Influential student achievement factors often lead back to school leaders, such as the principal. Yet, the principal's leadership is only secondary to that of the primary educator when considering influential ability among students (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). The historical relationship between teacher attrition and student achievement has extensively been examined while overlooking the necessary support system research to reduce teacher attrition.

Social Context

Teacher attrition is an incredible factor in the United States education system. Reportedly, 30-50% of educators choose to leave the teaching field within the first five years of service (Çakmak et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). Financially, schools spend approximately $9,000 to $21,000 on new teacher training and recruitment, with many new hires recruited upon graduation (Ford et al., 2019). Unfortunately, United States policymakers have deemed the severe teacher shortage a norm in education (Ford et al., 2019; Zavelevsky et al., 2022). Even further, as the United States population changes, there is expected to be an increase in the number of students going to school, a projected two percent increase in elementary enrollment between the years 2016 and 2028 to 57.4 million

students (NCES, 2020), but also a decrease in teachers as those with a multitude of experience

reach retirement age. About 28.1% of current teachers are 50 and older (Çakmak et al., 2019;

NCES, 2020). As teachers with decades of experience retire and novice teachers gain more

experience, researchers are expected to consider the societal changes that affect teacher self-

efficacy. Such research has been consistently explored by analyzing how new teachers develop,

understand, and build self-efficacy (Gholam, 2018; Whalen et al., 2019). Further research is a

significant factor in understanding how teachers influence student achievement (Bellibas & Liu,

2017). As teachers are known to be the most continuously influential factors in student

achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2017), it is imperative to explore how teachers are retained past

their beginning years (Çakmak et al., 2018). Since school leaders hire new teachers yearly,

administrators must be willing to support the development of educator self-efficacy to maintain

teacher continuity (Ford et al., 2019).

Theoretical Context

Teacher retention and continuity are often examined in educational research using a

variety of theories. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological model, teacher retention has

been explored to investigate principals' perceptions of the environmental school culture and how

it impacts teacher retention (Zavelevsky et al., 2022). The work-life imbalance of educators has

also been explored through the imposter syndrome lens (Clance & Imes, 1978), showcasing the

inability of teachers to dedicate time and talents to fulfilling career roles. Even further, teacher

beliefs and expectations of the teaching field have been explored through Vroom's (1964)

expectancy theory of motivation, which examines how workplace behavior is guided by

motivation, leadership, and decision-making (Hoang, 2020; Mata et al., 2021). Interestingly,

Bandura's (1977a) theory of self-efficacy has been applied in various studies to examine the

influence of principals' self-efficacy on teachers' collective efficacy in school (Liu et al., 2020; Versland & Erickson, 2017). The application of Bandura's (1977a) four principles, master experiences, social persuasion, vicarious experiences, and psychological arousal, are considered in research as factors of teacher self-efficacy within classroom management, instruction techniques, and student engagement (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). As an aspect of social cognitive theory (SCT), this study will apply such factors to further consider self-efficacy as a factor of teacher retention related to administrator support systems (Bandura, 1977b).

Problem Statement

The problem is that leadership support is insufficient in retaining novice teachers. Approximately 340,000 new teachers enter the field of education annually, with approximately 70,000 novice teachers leaving the profession each year, specifically in an educator's first year (NCES, 2020). A staggering 55% of teachers are considering leaving the profession earlier than planned (Walker, 2022). Novice teacher attrition is understood to be a significant problem in the United States public school system (Whalen et al., 2019). In recent years, teachers' efficacy and retention have become a focus of many educational systems throughout the United States (Gholam, 2018). School districts face teacher shortages and teacher retention issues (Gholam, 2018). Examining leadership support and teacher self-efficacy may provide insight into the problem. In addition, exploring how leadership styles affect school culture could guide leadership changes that improve school functioning (Lambersky, 2016; Mikser et al., 2021; Zavelevsky et al., 2022). In studying the lived experiences of novice teachers and their experiences with colleagues and leaders alike, there was the potential to uncover pertinent reasons for diminishing self-efficacy that could lead to teachers choosing to leave the profession

and a need to find better ways to support novice teachers while providing them with strategies to serve students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. At this stage in the research, leadership support was generally defined as the systems available to novice teachers that raise levels of morale and motivation, influencing new teachers to continue in the education field (Burns, 1978). The theory that guided this study was social cognitive theory as a framework to examine the components of teacher retention as related to leadership support systems (Bandura, 1977b). In addition, SCT guided additional perspectives of teacher self-efficacy in the classroom through social systems, individual factors, and behavior concepts (Bandura, 1977a). Previous studies have examined principal self-efficacy; However, the examination of teacher self-efficacy as related to leadership support that guides retention is overlooked in current literature (Versland & Erickson, 2017). For this study, novice teachers' self-efficacy was defined as the belief in the ability to conduct the necessary actions to achieve a particular outcome (Bandura, 1977a, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy presents itself in teachers in various ways, including classroom management, instruction, and student engagement.

Significance of the Study

Novice teachers face many challenges within their first few years of teaching that may affect self-efficacy (Anthony et al., 2019; Gholam, 2018; Lambersky, 2016; Versland & Erickson, 2017). This section begins with the theoretical significance. This study's empirical and practical aspects are discussed following the theoretical significance.

Theoretical

This study used Bandura's SCT (1977b). In utilizing SCT and its components, cognitive, environmental, and behavioral factors, this study will add to research supporting the impacts of leadership support on novice teacher retention. Within the SCT, Bandura discussed cognitive factors as personal factors, such as knowledge, expectations, and attitudes (Bandura, 1977b). As new to the profession, many novice teachers do not come in with a wide range of strategies in their toolbox to employ in the classroom. Not having these strategies can influence their and others' expectations of themselves. The environmental factors discussed in the SCT are social norms, access to the community, and the ability to affect change (Bandura, 1977b). Novice teachers require support and accessibility to their support systems. The behavioral factors within the SCT are skills, practice, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977b). Skill and practice work in tandem with self-efficacy, and self-efficacy is crucial in the perseverance of novice teachers. This study sought to add to current research through the lens of novice teachers and how cognitive, environmental, and behavioral factors influenced their retention.

Empirical

Prior studies have looked at novice teacher retention often from the perspective of highly efficacious leaders or leaders in general. Utilizing a hermeneutic design and from the lived experiences of novice teachers, this study presented a different perspective. Additionally, previous studies have looked at self-efficacy from all teachers. Still, this study examined the authentic experiences of novice teachers with no more than five years of teaching experience. Furthermore, studies have utilized additional theories, like Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socioecological model. Many studies using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socioecological model examine teacher retention from a single standpoint of their work environment. However, other

studies explore factors influencing teacher retention, from student-teacher relationships to teacher induction programs. This study sought to add to current research by looking at novice teacher retention from behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors through the lived experiences of novice teachers.

Practical

This study aided in understanding the pivotal perceptions of novice teachers and the support they need. In addition, because leaders have the considerable task of hiring and retaining quality teachers and influencing students' educational outcomes, they are responsible for improving performance among students and their schools through their teachers (Lambersky, 2016). Resultantly, examining leadership support systems is necessary to develop a robust understanding of the experiences of retained novice teachers. Specifically, there is a need to explore the influence of leadership support systems through the perspective of teachers and fill the developed research gap (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Socially, examining teachers' self-efficacy is a significant determining factor of student success in the classroom and lends itself to higher job satisfaction (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). This study explored how teachers' belief in themselves is influenced by the administrative support they receive (Ford et al., 2019). Finally, examining leadership support on novice teacher retention added to current research about the importance of teacher self-efficacy, the support needed by novice teachers, and the effect of leadership support systems on novice teacher attrition.

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Research Questions

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The following research questions guided this phenomenological study. These questions seek to understand better the lived experiences of novice teachers. Exploring these questions

further guided this study in researching how leadership support systems affect novice teacher retention.

Central Research Question

How do educational leaders affect novice teacher retention?

Sub-Question One

How do behaviors of leaders affect novice teachers?

Sub-Question Two

How does the educational environment affect novice teachers?

Sub-Question Three

How do cognitive factors affect novice teachers?

Definitions

1. *Attitude* - Something that can be learned through modeling appropriate or inappropriate behaviors (Bandura, 1977b, 1986, 1997).

2. *Educational leaders* - For this study, educational leaders will be defined as the school building principal. These will correspond to the principals' behaviors, beliefs, and practices used to improve teaching and learning within their schools (Liu et al., 2020).

3. *Efficacy* - One's thoughts on their capabilities and the ability to produce the desired outcome (Bandura, 1997a).

4. *Leadership support* - The systems available to novice teachers raise morality and motivation (Burns, 1978).

5. *Novice teacher* - For this study, a novice teacher will have no more than five years as an educator (Whalen et al., 2019).

6. *Teacher efficacy* - The belief that teachers impact the students they teach and that their work is essential (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016).

Summary

The problem is that leadership support is insufficient in retaining novice teachers. With approximately 340,000 new teachers entering the field of education and about 70,000 teachers leaving the field annually (NCES, 2020), an examination of how leadership support systems aid teacher retention is necessary. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. Such significance is grounded in teachers' influential aspects and ability to guide students toward academic success (Hoxha & Hyseni-Duraku, 2017). Not unnoticed, teacher self-efficacy has been the focus of many studies for the last decade (Hoxha & Hyseni-Duraku, 2017) since self-efficacy is an essential aspect of how teachers perform their jobs and a decisive factor in determining whether to continue in their career or leave the profession altogether. Understanding how teachers feel about their self-efficacy and the critical role administrators play in its influence, school leaders were guided to understand better the lived experiences of retained teachers and their self-efficacy related to leadership support systems.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. At this stage in the research, the retention influence of leadership support was generally defined as the systems available to novice teachers that raise levels of morality and motivation, influencing new teachers to continue in the education field (Burns, 1978). Responsively, a systematic review of the literature was conducted to examine the problem of novice teacher retention and the role leadership support plays in the self-efficacy development of new educators. This chapter reviews the current literature related to the topic of study. The first section explores the theoretical framework associated with self-efficacy and novice teachers. Next, a synthesis of the literature surrounding novice teacher challenges was examined while exploring the gap in current studies that presents a need for reporting the experiences of novice teacher self-efficacy concerning leadership support and educator retention.

Theoretical Framework

The influence of leadership support on novice teacher retention was explored using Bandura's (1977b) social cognitive theory (SCT). The application of SCT's behavioral, environmental, and cognitive factors was investigated throughout this study to understand novice educator retention experiences influenced by leadership support. Since SCT (Bandura, 1977b) is often utilized as a framework for human behavior, the theory aimed to guide an understanding of novice teacher retention behaviors. The theory explains that knowledge acquisition and human behavior happen through aspects of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. A focal point of SCT is self-efficacy, defined as an individual's perceived capabilities (Bandura, 1977b).

Theoretically explained, when an individual participates in areas of personal interest, self-efficacy influences their well-being and desire to be successful in an endeavor (Bandura, 1977b). Time, effort, and energy factors used to complete a task directly relate to an individual's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a). In teaching, especially for novice teachers, self-efficacy plays a significant role in how much effort and dedication will apply to everyday tasks and how well they adapt to ever-changing classroom situations (Bandura, 1977a).

SCT suggests that no one factor contributes to human behavior; instead, it is a blend of influences that impact the behaviors shown (Bandura, 1986). SCT is guided by behavioral factors, cognitive factors, and environmental elements that influence and are influenced by each other (Bandura, 1986). All these factors work in tandem to influence individual behavior. For example, cognitive factors determine what environmental happenings are observed, the meanings constructed by them, the lasting effects, if any, the emotional impacts, motivating power, and how the information will be stored for use in the future (Bandura, 1989a). These cognitive factors include knowledge, expectations, attitude, and self-perception (Bandura, 1989b). Since cognitive factors shape and direct behaviors (Bandura, 1989a), such elements may explain novice teachers' behavioral aspects as new employees entering the field with underlying expectations and attitudes of leadership. The knowledge obtained from previous experience may guide their teaching self-perception from which their behaviors are explained.

Another factor of SCT that theorizes human behavior is environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). Environmental elements of human behavior are often explained through social norms, community access, and the ability to influence others (Bandura, 1986). More specifically, the ability to influence others is guided by an individual's capacity to change their own environment (Bandura, 1986). When considering novice teacher retention, developing a sense of autonomy

may be directly related to leadership support. Thus, SCT may guide a more robust understanding of the autonomy preferences of novice teachers, the accepted or unaccepted social norms, and the access to leadership support (Bandura, 1986) related to the retention of novice teachers.

Behavioral factors of SCT (Bandura, 1986) may also guide a deeper understanding of novice teacher retention. Specifically, behavioral factors include skills, practice, and self-efficacy, which drive human behavior (Bandura, 1989). Since self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to perform necessary behaviors to achieve specific performance goals (Bandura, 1977a; 1986; 1988; 1993; 2005), a novice educator may find that this factor heavily influences their perception of skills and practice. Self-efficacy should not be considered a synonym for self-confidence, however. Bandura (1977a) differentiated self-efficacy from that of self-confidence, noting that self-confidence is the strength of one's beliefs. In contrast, self-efficacy is the belief in one's competency in achieving a goal (Bandura, 1977a). Such a concept is highly relatable to the retention of novice teachers since educators may relate their ability to accomplish goals through direct or indirect leadership support. Overall, the vital factors leading to human behavior will aid in understanding the retention behaviors of novice teachers as influenced by leadership.

Related Literature

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. At this stage in the research, the retention influence of leadership support was generally defined as the systems available to novice teachers that raise levels of morality and motivation, influencing new teachers to continue in the education field (Burns, 1978). An understanding of the context in which novice teachers are supported is examined through a literature review. The literature

review included aspects of novice teacher self-efficacy, such as retention, educator attrition, and the struggles of entering a new classroom.

Teacher Retention

Teacher preparation (Redding & Smith, 2016; Zhang & Zeller, 2016), school and district culture and conditions, opportunities for advancement (Mason & Matas, 2015), and meaningful experiences (Thibodeaux et al., 2015) often predict teacher retention. Relationships with colleagues and administrators are also influential in preserving educators within the field (Mason & Matas, 2015; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Webb, 2018). Often, educators report perceptions of a calling to the profession as a strong inspiration for outstanding teaching (Mason & Matas, 2015; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Webb, 2018). However, retaining teachers is challenging in many United States schools (Nketsia et al., 2022).

Interestingly, retaining qualified teachers is also an international issue. Many countries across the globe experience hardships that guarantee an adequate number of educators to meet student population demands (Craig, 2017; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Retention is often defined as a decision not to leave the profession despite challenges and difficulties rather than to remain in the job because of positive experiences (Dachille & Ruff, 2017). Definitions of retention and attrition surround much research addressing teacher retention; however, these terms differ (Mason & Matas, 2015). Alternatively, some scholars define retention as continuing in the teaching profession (Podolsky et al., 2019), while others define retention as continuing at the same school (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

Educators' decisions to remain within the profession are multifaceted and accompanied by intrinsic motivation when challenges arise (Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2014). Motivation and efficacy are often discussed as two leading facilitators of teacher retention (Alexander et al.,

2020; Chiong et al., 2017; Day & Gu, 2009; Tricarico et al., 2015). In addition, teacher self-efficacy encompasses instructional abilities and student-teacher relationships (Day & Gu, 2009; Hong, 2012). Teacher retention is at the forefront of all educational agendas to combat current teacher shortages across the United States (Çakmak et al., 2018).

Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition, the alternative to retention, is defined as the negative experiences associated with teaching that drive an individual to leave the profession (Dachille & Ruff, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019) and is often varied and interrelated (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Podolsky et al., 2019). Teachers will leave their jobs, a specific school, or a position when another option provides better rewards; these rewards can be extrinsic, such as salary, or intrinsic, such as job satisfaction (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Teacher attrition affects teachers of all years of experience (Craig, 2017). However, attrition rates are higher for those teachers with fewer years in the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Springer et al., 2016).

Teacher burnout is a job-related occurrence caused by prolonged stress in work settings (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Zavelevsky et al., 2022) and can significantly impact teacher attrition. Interestingly, individuals entering the education field with no prior professional career experience are likelier to leave the profession than novice teachers who started with career experience in another field before becoming a teacher (Troesche & Bauer, 2017). Research shows teacher attrition increases in schools with lower socioeconomic statuses and among educators with diverse backgrounds (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Springer et al., 2016). In low socioeconomic and minority schools, negative teacher and student outcomes often result from students' socioeconomic characteristics, such as teacher distrust of students (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Interestingly, teacher attrition can be

challenged by promoting teacher self-efficacy in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Novice Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief in oneself and the ability to organize and carry out courses of action necessary to handle possible scenarios (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy is derived from learned behaviors developed from various experiences (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Sasson & Malkinson, 2021). Teachers' self-efficacy is often directly influenced by the school principal's leadership (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Huang et al., 2022) and can affect a teacher's decision to remain in the teaching profession, linking self-efficacy to decreased teacher burnout, higher job satisfaction, and improved motivation levels (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Huang et al., 2022; Troesch & Bauer, 2017). As a self-efficacy factor, teacher empowerment is linked directly to instructional leader relationships with teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Sasson & Malkinson, 2021). Instructional leaders actively participate in the instructional program, set expectations for continuous growth and collegial relationships, model desired behaviors, participate in training, and give consistent attention to instructional concerns (Sasson & Malkinson, 2021; Smith & Andrews, 1989). In addition, instructional leaders can affect positive self-efficacy through constant feedback and recognition, increasing self-esteem, and motivation to perform well (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Ford et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2022).

In recent years, policymakers have moved away from impacting teachers' self-efficacy for the better and have begun placing wagers on student performance. Policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) have created value-added models and incentives for the United States' educational system. While such systems aim to improve student achievement, incentives and wagers on teacher performance directly related

to student performance may promote educator self-doubt and stress (Garcia-Arroyo et al., 2019).

Value-added models, which are attempts to measure teacher effectiveness using student test

scores (Opper, 2019), are alternative routes of punishment for teachers who are not performing

adequately, which may lead to new policies and value-added models for measuring teacher

success. Even further, some state and local school districts implementing bonus systems to

encourage improved teacher performance lower educator intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy

(Ford et al., 2019; Opper, 2019; Schaufeli et al., 2009; Springer et al., 2016). Overall, value-

added models create confusion surrounding teacher expectations. In turn, teachers doubt their job

abilities, from which a lowered self-efficacy is experienced (Ford et al., 2019; Opper, 2019), and

a negative professional attitude is developed.

Novice Teacher Attitudes Towards Teaching

Teacher attitudes focus on individual responses to an external purpose (Kenadi, 2017;

Soibchanba & Panday, 2016). Experiences and intellectual aspects shape attitudes. Experiences

often involve emotions or feelings associated with the educational career, while philosophical

elements deal with beliefs about abilities and behaviors toward teaching (Zaida, 2015). Attitudes

greatly value completing tasks related to an individual's profession and influence how

individuals interact with others (Kenadi, 2017; Soibchanba & Panday, 2016). Novice teachers

often enter the work with ready-to-work attitudes and excitement about changing the world.

Studies have found that the attitudes of novice teachers impact their abilities to remain in the

profession. To do so and be effective, novice teachers should possess a positive attitude toward

the responsibilities of a teacher and their roles (Soibchanba & Panday, 2016).

Novice teachers' zeal and motivation often aid in developing a positive attitude toward

the teaching field (Veldman et al., 2016). However, throughout the novice years, experiences

will create a positive or negative attitude toward the education profession; these experiences that

lead to a negative attitude correlate with their decision to leave the job (Kenadi, 2017;

Thibodeaux et al., 2015). For example, suppose novice teachers have experiences that lead to

negative attitudes. The negative attitudes may affect novice teachers' effectiveness in delivering

instruction, student relationships, and collegial relationships, reinforcing the negative attitude

and leading to the decision to abandon the profession (Kenadi, 2017; Koenen et al., 2019). In

contrast, novice teachers with positive experiences may lead to constructive attitudes in their

classrooms, helping to develop student achievement and a positive school environment that

tremendously benefits the educational system and promotes teacher retention (Kenadi, 2017;

Koenen et al., 2019). A positive attitude towards teaching is vital for teachers who remain in the

profession. This positive attitude is associated with greater self-efficacy and satisfaction with

teaching (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Blackburn et al., 2017). Furthermore, a greater sense of self-

efficacy and a positive attitude lead to greater job satisfaction and increased teacher retention

(Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Blackburn et al., 2017).

Motivation

Motivation is a prominent feature of self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Motivation and attitude beliefs coerce teachers to accomplish tasks (Rubenstein et al., 2018).

Within SCT, an individual's beliefs dictate their behaviors and actions (Bandura, 1986), and

these self-efficacy principles are fundamental in the SCT (Bandura, 1977b). Because of this,

motivation has significance within the SCT (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). When teachers lack

motivation, they may avoid tasks, teach specific material, face challenges, or settle for less

impactful teaching strategies, thus resulting in poor student performance (Rubenstein et al.,

2018). Motivation is directly related to self-efficacy (e.g., Bas, 2022; Chan et al., 2021; La Velle, 2021; Lauermann & Berger, 2021; Mahler et al., 2018).

Motivation and self-efficacy work in tandem and reinforce one another (Granziera & Perera, 2019). Teachers with high self-efficacy employ motivation to think, act, and persevere through challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Conversely, teachers with high self-efficacy authenticate beliefs across steady progress and actions, boosting motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Motivation has two dimensions: a willingness to accept change and self-acceptance and enhancement (Barni et al., 2019); however, these are not often considered in self-efficacy studies. Studies dealing with teacher self-efficacy focus more on motivational processes, which are personal factors that influence behavior (Barni et al., 2019; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Motivation employs an individual's individualities and behaviors; because of this, the social cognitive theory has an integral role in motivational processes since it highlights the relationship between personal factors and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Teacher self-efficacy constantly creates and decomposes beliefs essential to social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). The goal is to build up teachers' beliefs to effectively teach and promote student learning (Mahler et al., 2018; Rubenstein et al., 2018). Self-efficacy and motivation are characteristics of effective teachers (Granziera & Perera, 2019; Mahler et al., 2018; Rubenstein et al., 2018). Students' success increases when teachers are knowledgeable and motivated (Mahler et al., 2018; Rubenstein et al., 2018). Teacher motivation has consistently influenced student learning (Mahler et al., 2018; Rubenstein et al., 2018). Teachers with high self-efficacy can have motivational outcomes like students with high self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The parallel between teachers' and students' self-efficacy appears because motivated

teachers' actions move student engagement (Barni et al., 2019). Therefore, motivation is vital in teaching and affects student learning (Mahler et al., 2018).

Challenges Faced by Novice Teachers

Retaining teachers is essential to any educational organization (Gholam, 2018). Yet, within the first five years, approximately 15-50% of novice teachers leave the profession (Anthony et al., 2019; Edinger & Edinger, 2018; Whalen et al., 2019). Novice teachers often receive insufficient support in their beginning years, and this, coupled with the challenges of managing a classroom, teaching, curriculum, principal observations, and value-laden test scores, can cause high-stress levels and lead to professional abandonment (Gholam, 2018; Redding & Henry, 2019). Novice teachers are tasked with the job of developing and maintaining classroom routines, effectively managing a classroom, planning effective and engaging lessons, and differentiating and modifying assessments, all while collaborating with other teachers, building student relationships, and keeping parents engaged in their child's learning (Çakmak et al., 2018; Gholam, 2018). Such challenges may have been outside the college-level educational curriculum, creating a lack of preparation for such challenges. For example, spur-of-moment decisions must be made in a real classroom that no time spent in a college classroom could adequately prepare teachers for (Çakmak et al., 2018). The issue arises when novice teachers need more repertoire to cope with classroom challenges or a toolbox of strategies to pull from (Çakmak et al., 2018).

Detrimental effects of low self-efficacy among teachers and its ability to cause increased stress levels are often found among teachers who find daily classroom tasks more challenging than tolerable (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Novice teachers also face personal circumstances within and outside the classroom that can influence their performance in school (Rinke &

Mawhinney, 2017). In classrooms, novice teachers must cross numerous hindrances, including public scrutiny, constantly changing accountability measures, and inadequate resources (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Intense workloads are shared with added burdens created by high-stakes testing and accountability mandates that have proven to be central in creating stressful atmospheres for novice teachers with immense effects on teacher attrition (Farinde et al., 2016).

In addition, new teachers experience various issues when entering the teaching profession that influence a teacher's decision to leave the career field despite personal and professional aspirations (Podolsky et al., 2019). First, at the top of the list were personal reasons, such as pregnancy and family matters. Second, interest in finding a job outside of teaching, considered a better fit, was also at the top of the list (Mason & Matas, 2015; Podolsky et al., 2019). Finally, frustration with the school, parent relationships, and teacher autonomy also contribute to leaving the teaching field (Mason & Matas, 2015; Podolsky et al., 2019). These and other factors account for the lack of retention among novice educators.

The Influence of Pre-Service Programs

With changes in how teacher certification can occur, there are also current pathways causing issues within the current teacher market. Many teachers are less experienced than they have been due to entering the profession through various means (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Redding & Henry, 2019; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). This often includes decreasing enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs, higher expectations of specified content areas, unbalanced salary scales, and feelings of absent administrative support (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). While many teachers need a typical four-year educational degree with student teaching experience to enter the teaching field, there are other pathways for gaining access to classroom professions (Redding & Henry,

2019). These new educational pathways come with challenges in dealing with teacher attrition, particularly among novice teachers. Non-traditional novice teachers who choose to enter the profession through alternative certification methods are likelier to leave than teachers who chose traditional preparation programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

Approximately 25% of teachers enter the profession through some alternative certification program (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Additionally, many of these programs require less coursework and little to no student-teacher compared to the traditional path to certification (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Studies have found that teachers who entered the profession through a formal certification program were likelier to remain a teacher for more than four years than those who chose alternate pathways (Redding & Smith, 2016; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). In addition, teachers who pursue alternative routes to certification may feel ill-prepared for teaching due to a lack of coursework surrounding strategies and best practices (Redding & Smith, 2016; Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

Salary

Novice teachers also face the challenge of low salaries and inequitable pay scales compared to other occupations with similar years of experience and education (Feng & Sass, 2016; Podolsky et al., 2019). Teacher payment has demonstrated a trivial yet contributory influence on teacher attrition (Miles & Katz, 2018). The National Education Association Research (2019) reported that the nation's average starting teacher salary was $39,249 during the 2017-2018 school year, an estimated 19% lower than comparable occupations with equivalent levels of earned education. Novice teachers who work in districts with moderately lower earnings than other school districts across a particular state are more likely to transfer or leave

the field of education, even more so if the salary is lower than potential earnings that could be received outside of the teaching profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Recently, the idea of teacher performance pay has also caused issues for not only novice teachers but veteran teachers. While the concept stems from an extrinsic model of transactional support, many teachers are not motivated by monetary rewards (Colson & Satterfield, 2018; Shifrer et al.,2017). Interestingly, teacher salary is a prominent factor influencing teachers' decision to leave the profession (Mertler, 2016). On the contrary, some educators find the anticipation of monetary bonuses and allowances to be motivational for remaining in the field (Yeboah & Adom, 2016). While the literature is inconclusive in demonstrating a strong correlation between intrinsic or extrinsic motivations to teach, such evidence highlights one of the many issues novice teachers face when considering remaining or leaving the profession. While seemingly trivial, salary is a means of livelihood and a deciding factor for which teachers choose to explore other careers or stay within the educational field.

Working Conditions

Working conditions for novice teachers may also influence teacher self-efficacy and impact the overall retention of educators. There is much stress associated with being a novice teacher, and many aspects of teaching can weigh heavily on those just entering the profession. Teachers who rated their working conditions as better and more satisfactory had lower attrition rates (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Stewart & Janksy, 2022). Surprisingly, the schools with improved working conditions and lower attrition rates were also schools in high-poverty areas with predominantly minority students (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Stewart & Janksy, 2022). This study concluded that working

conditions were an intervening influence in the relationship between school demographics and teacher attrition.

Teacher stress and self-efficacy were researched to forecast engagement, emotional exhaustion, and motivation to leave teaching (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Stewart & Janksy, 2022). Seven possible identifiable stressful variables within the school context could predict teachers' experiences through self-efficacy, emotional stress, emotional exhaustion, engagement in teaching, and motivation to leave the teaching profession (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Stewart & Janksy, 2022). In addition, two primary motivators for teachers leaving the profession include time pressure through emotional stress and exhaustion for teacher motivation to quit and lack of administrative support and trust, low student motivation, and value conflicts through lower self-efficacy and lower engagement with teacher motivation to quit (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors associated with retention, incorporating the potential for resolving effects on teacher motivation or intention to quit the profession (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016).

Furthermore, additional research brings to light the challenges novice teachers face and experiences often not addressed within teacher education programs (Flory, 2016), which only adds to an already stressful career. Novice teachers entering the classrooms often face a reality shock with everyday problems surrounding classroom management, never-ending paperwork, and the diverse needs of the learners (Stroot & Ko, 2006; Veenman, 1984). This reality shock can have an intensely negative impact on the effectiveness of novice teachers and has been found to impact educator attitudes toward the teaching profession and retention (Richards et al., 2014; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2021; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

Classroom Management

One stressor for classroom teachers, especially novice teachers, is classroom management (Bottiani et al., 2019). This is because teachers' beliefs in themselves significantly influence classroom practices (Lin & Bates, 2010). Classroom management is a teaching task that requires proper conduct and management (Wolf et al., 2021). Studies consider classroom management as an aspect of teacher professionalism because teacher self-efficacy beliefs influence a teacher's conduct in the classroom (e.g., Rubenstein et al., 2018; Mansor et al., 2021). Since self-efficacy beliefs affect teachers' behaviors, SCT helps connect beliefs to actions (Bandura, 1986), such as explaining teachers' beliefs to their teaching capabilities. A teacher manages a classroom to aid student learning (Rubenstein et al., 2018). Classroom management demonstrates a teacher's ability to handle problems and maintain the classroom environment (Daniilidou et al., 2020).

COVID-19 and Novice Teachers

In 2019, the reality of a global pandemic changed the face of education worldwide. COVID-19 presented many challenges for all professionals in education (Daniel, 2020). Public school districts moved into virtual learning by implementing distance learning software and differentiated curricula to support students and continue teaching (Gunawan et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has undesirably impacted the mental and emotional well-being of individuals across the globe (Passavanti et al., 2021); public school teachers faced with added job demands and limited resources were not excused from these stressful consequences (Anderson et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021). With an almost immediate switch to virtual education, teachers and administrators alike struggled due to their unfamiliarity with online learning and technology platforms (Daniel, 2020). Researchers discovered that teachers need support in remote teaching strategies, effective instruction delivery, motivational techniques, and ways to engage students in

social-emotional learning (Hamilton et al., 2020; Sousa, 2021). Researchers also found that the resources available to novice teachers and school districts serving different student populations were vastly different (Hamilton et al., 2020). Like frontline healthcare workers, the COVID-19 pandemic could weaken teachers perceived self-efficacy (Pressley & Ha, 2021) and increase burnout (Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021), leading to an increased number of novice teachers leaving and entering the profession.

The classrooms teachers who entered during the global pandemic looked vastly different than those pre-pandemic. Many in-service novice teachers did not return to in-person, face-to-face instruction but rather to teaching at a distance or via a hybrid model (VanLone et al., 2022). No matter the teaching modality, novice teachers had a task unlike any other following the global pandemic, and its impacts on teacher retention continue to be experienced (Hamilton et al., 2020; VanLone et al., 2022). The global COVID-19 pandemic highlighted some of the daily struggles novice teachers face while guiding meaningful conversations surrounding the support needed to become and remain successful.

Needed Administrative Supports

Administrators' role in novice teachers' teaching careers may guide insight into the development or abandonment of educators in the field. Unfortunately, administrator support is often limited (Stewart & Jansky, 2022; Van der Vyver et al., 2020). As a result, novice teachers graduate, become employed, and often feel alone, anxious, and uncertain of what it means to be a good teacher (Stewart & Jansky, 2022; Van der Vyver et al., 2020). Nevertheless, administrators are crucial in aiding novice teachers, providing resources, and being instructional leaders when needed. Since novice teachers face challenges when entering the classroom and many at once (Anthony et al., 2019), their difficulties can be relieved or heightened, depending on their

support (Anthony et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). In addition, new teachers need administrative help in crucial ways. Still, there are varying opinions between administrators and teachers regarding adequate administrative support since school leaders' roles have changed over time, with administrators more focused on their role in aiding student success and achievement (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018).

Administrators are undoubtedly fundamental to student success; however, their approach is more indirect than a teacher's (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). Administrators influence their teachers' beliefs and actions, directly impacting classroom performance (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). Specifically, an administrator is critical in aiding student achievement by directly influencing how novice educators teach (Hoxha & Hyseni-Duraku, 2017). Novice teachers may feel more supported by administrators who take on instructional leadership roles and are involved in lesson planning and classroom observations. A sense of trust may also be established between the administrator and educator through immediate and direct contact.

School leaders, such as principals and school administrators, also have the charge of learning the needs of their staff and implementing strategies, policies, and essential school cultural changes that lead to teacher retention. Therefore, creating an environment supportive of employee motivation is necessary for school leaders (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Coetzee et al., 2014; Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Observably, teacher mentor programs have been a practical and efficient practice for providing novice and seasoned teachers with the support needed to retain quality educators. However, failing to implement motivational strategies and create a positive culture leads to teachers feeling alone in their buildings and missing the support needed to aid student success (Holmes et al., 2019). Overall, principals improve learning by influencing teacher motivations and creating a culture of support (Coetzee et al., 2014; Eliophotou-Menon &

Loannou, 2016; Shibiti, 2017). Thus, it is recommended that district administrations and principals support novice teachers through a motivational culture that aids in developing a more substantial positional commitment (Shibiti, 2017; Tourangeau et al., 2017).

Novice Teacher Mentor Programs

Teacher induction and mentoring programs can provide novice teachers the needed support to reduce stress and discouragement during early career years, contributing to career abandonment (Kelly et al., 2018; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). Without a supportive culture and the development of collegial relationships, novice teachers are more likely to be dissatisfied in the workplace, leading to a lack of teaching career commitment (Kelly et al., 2018; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). Such programs facilitate the transitional phase from university apprenticeship to classroom leadership. An essential component of induction programs is the mentorship program supported by veteran teachers (Garber, 2013; Podolsky et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Timothy et al., 2020; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). A mentor teacher may be paired with a novice teacher to aid in the transition to full-time teaching in their classroom. Although this one-to-one support has been shown to help lower attrition rates among novice teachers, some schools that fail to provide mentorship programming experience teacher attrition twice as often as schools providing such support (Garber, 2013; Podolsky et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). For novice teachers, mastery experiences may be crucial in their early careers. Observations of more seasoned peers in action can provide novice teachers with valued vicarious experiences to learn their craft (Bandura, 1986, 1994).

Observing seasoned teacher-mentors committed to the profession supports novice teachers' growth (Georgia Department of Education [GaDOE], 2016). Through the mentorship

program, the teacher-mentor provides support, shares teaching and learning practices, and advises novice teachers on the best methods that impact student growth and achievement. Observably, since teacher attrition is a problem, school districts often look to create and implement teacher induction and mentoring programs to combat the problem, making teacher mentorship roles progressively more critical. New teachers who work with impactful and strong professionals within the confines of a well-thought-out mentoring induction program show more significant success in lesson planning, classroom management, delivery, and student engagement (Dreer, 2021; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Matlach & Potemski, 2014).

Thus, mentor teachers play an essential role in retaining novice teachers. Teacher mentors provide needed support, especially during the first year. Since many teachers who leave the profession exit within the first five years, schools and districts have created committees responsible for the creation of teacher mentoring through teacher induction programs (Bell et al., 2022; Dreer, 2021; Rakes et al., 2023). These programs often target teachers with one to five years of teaching experience (Dreer, 2021; Rakes et al., 2023). Pairing mentors with novice teachers can only be done with careful planning and consideration to create effective partnerships. For example, pairing mentors and novice teachers who teach the same content areas and have a standard planning period often share the most benefit (Dreer, 2021; Ingersoll, 2001). Even further, the mentoring process must include content-focused meetings, training for the mentors, and time for one-on-one sessions between the mentor and the mentee (Dreer, 2021; Podolsky et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). There are specific characteristics of veteran teachers who could effectively fill the mentor teacher role. Specific characteristics often include being effective communicators, dependable, open-minded, compassionate, and respectful (Dreer, 2021; Hall et al., 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019). Along with

these characteristics, mentor teachers must be well-versed in meaningful and frequent feedback to challenge novice teachers and promote self-reflection (Bell et al., 2022; Dreer, 2021; Hall et al., 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Seeing a need for teacher induction programs and mentoring for novice teachers, the GaDOE created and released a Teacher Induction Guidance document in 2016. This document outlined the reasons for and provided consistent guidance on implementing teacher induction programs. Within this document, the GaDOE defined a mentor teacher as highly committed and motivated to support the personal growth of the induction phase teacher. The Teacher Induction Guidance document (2016) then outlines the duties and responsibilities of a mentor teacher in Georgia. According to the GaDOE (2016), the duties and responsibilities of a teacher mentor include the following:

1. Offer instructional, professional, and personal support to induction phase teachers.

2. Use efficient communication and collaboration skills to help the induction phase teachers.

3. Assist with coordinating and facilitating interventions and professional learning experiences to guide the growth and development of induction phase teachers. and,

4. Serve on the Induction Phase Teacher Support Team.

Novice teachers, also named the induction phase teacher, has duties and responsibilities outlined in this document by the GaDOE. The Teacher Induction Guidance document (2016) states that during the induction phase, the teacher must:

1. Accept the responsibility to be open and honest regarding needs for growth and development.

2. Participate in all aspects of the induction program to guarantee teacher effectiveness and to positively impact student growth and achievement; and,

3. Serve on the Induction Phase Teacher Support Team.

Each participant, the induction phase teacher, and the mentor teacher are responsible and vital in the joint effort between building staff, school leaders, and district leaders in retaining novice teachers. Mentor teachers not only give emotional guidance that strengthens a novice teacher's self-esteem and confidence levels, but the professional development provided by mentor teachers also improves the professional work of the novice teacher (Bell et al., 2022; Yirci, 2017). As a result of these supports, novice teachers may better adapt to their teaching roles, have a greater sense of belonging, and increase teacher retention (Bell et al., 2022; Yirci, 2017).

Relationships and Self-Efficacy

Educators will gain a sense of community through a developed sense of belonging while fulfilling human connection needs (McMillian & Chavis, 2007). Human connection is essential to existence (McMillian & Chavis, 2007). For novice teachers, creating relationships within their school building is necessary to overcome numerous challenges with a team of colleagues. Without such a connection, teachers may experience disconnection, evoking internal feelings about their success and decision to stay in the classroom. There are three critical areas where building relationships can positively impact novice teachers (Anthony et al., 2019; Sehgal et al., 2017). First, the relationships they create with their colleagues; second, the relationships novice teachers build with their administrators; and third, the relationships novice teachers build with their students (Anthony et al., 2019; Sehgal et al., 2017). Each of these relationships allows for a valuable connection that aids in overcoming challenges and celebrating successes (Anthony et al., 2019; Sehgal et al., 2017).

Relationships with Colleagues and Administrators

Novice teachers need a system of support to overcome challenges. This support often comes from veteran teachers in their specific schools (Kavanagh et al., 2022; Sehgal et al., 2017). The collaboration between teachers helps alleviate fears and uncertainties that can inhibit teaching quality (Sehgal et al., 2017). In addition, since novice teachers struggle with student success, teamwork, and healthy interpersonal relationships within schools, collaboration can increase student success and improve teaching and learning (Kavanagh et al., 2022; Sehgal et al., 2017).

Teacher mentors, also known as teacher leadership, focus on the relationship between novice teachers and their colleagues. This relationship is defined by how teachers individually and collectively influence their fellow peers and the school (Anthony et al., 2019). Supportive colleagues can facilitate retention by buffering against challenging working conditions and occupational stress (Fernet et al., 2010; Grillo & Kier, 2021; Kavanagh et al., 2022; Pomaki et al., 2010; Struyve et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2021). In this, teacher leaders arise and often find themselves working as mentors for their newer peers. Teacher leadership has links to a direct influence on teacher retention. Teacher leaders can support two critical areas novice teachers need: socialization and organizational support (Anthony et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2021). With continued support, teacher attitudes may become more favorable toward the profession over time (Anthony et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2021) by learning strategies to interact cooperatively and effectively with students and colleagues.

Formal and informal teacher mentors aid in changing organizational culture, challenging the notion that executive leadership, such as a principal, dictates the school-building environment. School energy often flows from stakeholder connections and networks built among

colleagues (Berkovich, 2018; Nuemann, 2018). When school administrators have a network of educators, culture, history, and connections become the basis for many implemented changes (Berkovich, 2018; Nuemann, 2018). And while teachers play a vital role in developing the school culture, schools may be limited by the official leader decisions, such as the principal. School employees' success is primarily related to their trust in their leader (Berkovich, 2018; Nuemann, 2018). Therefore, leaders have begun to shift their focus to developing a positive school culture that fosters relationships between all those they serve. Enhancing school relationships limits negative associations' abilities on the school (Martin & Collie, 2018). In looking at and fostering positive student-teacher and teacher-administrator relationships, a positive culture may ensue while guiding student, teacher, and organizational success.

Responsively, public schools have increasingly shifted their focus on supportive relationships with teachers as an important variable related to student outcomes (Mason et al., 2017). With supportive relationships come encouraging learning environments for not only students but teachers as well. Supportive colleagues can provide necessary relational and instructional support fostering a sense of collective teaching efficacy, which motivates teachers and facilitates their intention to stay (De Neve & Devos, 2016; Tiplic et al., 2015).

Positive relationships also create a strong sense of motivation and learning within a school (Claessens et al., 2016; Grissom & Bartanen, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2006). Specifically, relationships between principals and teachers are vital to retaining teachers. For example, effective principals have higher teacher retention rates (Grissom & Bartanen, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2006). In addition, principals with high levels of self-efficacy are more determined to pursue goals and change the environment to meet those goals; those with lower self-efficacy are more resistant, both factors which could affect teacher retention

(Claessens et al., 2016; Grissom & Bartanen, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2006). Even further, effective leadership from principals often indicates that higher-performing teachers will continue teaching in future years, whereas lower-performing teachers may divert from the school or field (Claessens et al., 2016; Grissom & Bartanen, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2006). Interestingly and contrary to current literature, effective principals could also be considered individuals who support lower-performing teachers to aid in their professional development and classroom conduct. Overall, effective principals affect relationships among school personnel and impact how teachers perform and feel about their contributions to the school. Influentially, leadership may indirectly find ways to motivate and support student achievement through teacher guidance while allowing those unmotivated in the field to depart to aid in school success (Claessens et al., 2016; Grissom & Bartanen, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2006).

Often, school success is considered based on academic effectiveness. However, research must consider the success of schools more broadly (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Pressley, 2021). For example, in looking at administrator-teacher relationships, it is imperative to consider how teachers perceive this relationship's importance. Positive relationships between teachers and administrators increase teacher retention rates (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Pressley, 2021; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). In contrast, the main reasons for leaving the profession include lack of administrative support, teachers' workload, and student discipline (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). In addition, teachers' perceptions of leadership significantly impact their classroom performance and commitment to the school (Eliophotou-Menon, 2014). Therefore, to retain good teachers, it is imperative that educators feel as though leaders are leading and maintaining a positive relationship with those in the classroom.

Working to increase self-efficacy increases teacher confidence and collaboration (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Pressley, 2021). Through teamwork, teachers build trust in their community of colleagues and increase collective efficacy. Administrative leaders, such as principals, instructional coaches, and district leaders, play a vital role in self-efficacy beliefs (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Sehgal et al., 2017). Administrative leaders can increase teacher self-efficacy through modeling and scaffolding while building positive relationships during collaborative time with teachers (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Pressley, 2021; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Focusing on teachers and their self-efficacy increases the collective efficacy of the school. When administrators pay attention to individual teachers, work to solicit their input in future decisions, and involve them in the day-to-day operations of the school, administrators increase teachers' feelings of competency and, thus, increase teachers' self-efficacy (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Hoang, 2020; Sun & Leithwood, 2015).

Principals promote collegial leadership and comradery by supporting teachers and their efforts to impact and encourage student achievement (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2006). Collegial leadership and teacher professionalism foster student engagement, thus positively impacting students' experiences within the school building. Teachers teach students by guiding the learning objectives, which significantly influences students' success (Almessabi, 2021; Mahler et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). Leadership involves a school's day-to-day functions and operations (Capp et al., 2021). The administration and teachers are responsible for the school's academic success, including a commitment to excellence and the push for quality education (Holzberger et al., 2020). The SCT explains how personal beliefs and actions of teachers and leadership supports can influence students. Administration and teachers' performance contribute to

professionalism, academic success, and community involvement, positively impacting self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2006).

Relationships with Students

While administrator-teacher relationships are critical in teacher retention, student-teacher relationships are often at the forefront of school focus. For example, within successful schools, students feel a sense of belonging (Berghdal, 2022; Berghdal et al., 2020; Engels et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2016). Students feel they matter and their voices are heard (Berghdal, 2022; Berghdal et al., 2020; Engels et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2016). Along with a sense of belonging and importance within a school, student-teacher relationships play a vast role in the child's development through contributions to student behavioral and academic gains (Engels et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2016). Behavioral and academic improvements benefit both the students and the school, and these alone grow exponentially when the relationships with their teachers are positive. On the contrary, student-teacher conflicts negatively impact students' academic achievement, so striving for positive environmental and educational support is necessary (Mason et al., 2017).

Poor familial relationships and environments are unfortunate for many students, heightening the importance of a valuable student-teacher relationship (Archambault et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2016; Toste et al., 2015). Often, a relationship with a teacher may be the only positive and stable relationship a student experiences; this provides students with a sense of security (Archambault et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2016; Toste et al., 2015). These relationships students have with teachers, with safety, trust, and other characteristics, are crucial and play a massive role in the relationship the students will have in the future, with both their education and in life (Archambault et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2016; Toste et al., 2015). For these reasons, it is

imperative that schools set the tone for developing a positive school culture that promotes positive classroom relationships.

A lack of positive teacher-student relationships can cause students to avoid school and not work to meet their potential (Archambault et al., 2017; Berghdal et al., 2020; Mason et al., 2017). Student disengagement, sometimes called the disengagement pandemic, occurs because of poor teacher-student relationships (Archambault et al., 2017; Berghdal et al., 2020; Mason et al., 2017). Much like interest in their subjects and schoolwork, student-teacher relationships are crucial in charting the course of student engagement in school (Archambault et al., 2017; Berghdal et al., 2020; Mason et al., 2017). Preventing student disengagement and promoting engagement through positive teacher-student relationships is another reason schools should focus on this type of culture within their building (Berghdal, 2022; Berghdal et al., 2020)

Novice teachers' perceptions of their ability are critical in understanding novice teachers' issues when managing a classroom and building relationships with challenging students. Self-efficacy does not denote an individual's actual skills but indicates the perception of their abilities (Bandura, 1977a). A quality of having firm views is teachers' amplified confidence in skills and knowledge to promote student learning (Lacks & Watson, 2018). As SCT pertains to teachers' self-efficacy, teachers' beliefs and teaching abilities become pertinent to building confidence (Rubenstein et al., 2018). Research has demonstrated that self-assured teachers are more likely to foster student engagement enthusiastically and achieve positive results in student learning (Mahler et al., 2018). Low self-efficacy in a novice teacher that presents itself in the form of self-doubt and an inability to make a difference in the lives of the students they often teach results in the educator leaving the profession (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Kim & Seo, 2018; Ninkovic & Floric, 2018). Teachers with high self-efficacy show more excitement and

motivation for teaching while possessing a more positive attitude toward education. (Bellibas &
Liu, 2017; Cansoy & Parlar, 2018).

Novice teachers' self-efficacy includes their thoughts and values towards their
instructional practices and how they influence student achievement. Teachers with high self-
efficacy consistently collaborate with their colleagues to improve instructional strategies that
meet their student population's demands, leading to increased student achievement (Kim & Seo,
2018; Ninkovic & Floric, 2018). These same teachers network with their students and
demonstrate higher persistence toward academic excellence (Kim & Seo, 2018; Ninkovic &
Floric, 2018). Additionally, teachers with higher self-efficacy are more confident in
implementing effective and new instructional strategies within their classrooms, contributing to a
positive school culture (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Cansoy & Parlar, 2018).

School Culture

School culture is the shared experiences inside and outside a school that create a sense of
team, community, and family (Barkley, 2013; Yli-Panula et al., 2022). School culture is the
character of a school, which includes the norms, values, and expectations the school accepts and
promotes from all parties involved (Barkley, 2013; Brookover, 1985; Yli-Panula et al., 2022).
Cultural paradigms influence school culture in teaching and learning components through social
norms, values, and practices within the curriculum and throughout daily social conversations
(Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Hollins, 2012). School culture, often called school climate, pivots
around belonging, autonomy, transition, the induction process, and the learning community
(Barkley, 2013; Brookover, 1985; Yli-Panula et al., 2022). All these factors are significantly
influenced by school and district leaders (Player et al., 2017; Urick, 2016; Von der Embse et al.,
2016).

There is a link between school culture and high teacher self-efficacy (Almessabi, 2021;

Zakariya, 2020), where such elements influence a teacher's feelings. Such environmental factors

within school culture include the classroom environment and teachers, relationships between

teachers and coworkers, stakeholders and the community, and cultural backgrounds of teachers

and students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As a result, school culture significantly increases teachers'

self-efficacy (Almessabi, 2021; Zakariya, 2020).

As such, building-level administrators have the vital task of establishing a school culture

that supports all teachers (Player et al., 2017; Turner & Morelli, 2017; Urick, 2016; Von der

Embse et al., 2016). This culture must support teachers in their endeavors to create meaningful

student experiences and build relationships among teachers based on the foundational feelings of

trust and collaboration (Turner & Morelli, 2017). Education entities across the United States and

abroad aim to promote student achievement and global competitiveness through educational

excellence (United States Department of Education, 2023). These goals can be attained by

creating a positive school culture and meaningful collaborative and professional relationships

between administrators, teachers, and students.

School culture is often measured using qualitative experiences as participants describe

feelings associated with the environment, but the feedback received from all stakeholders within

the building is anecdotal (Bowen et al., 2017). The issue of school culture has come to the

forefront of education, much like discussions of mental health and socioemotional learning

within schools (Sousa, 2021). A principal can lead the school and shape the school's culture

(Bowen et al., 2017). Principals and assistant principals can positively impact novice teachers'

retention, particularly those within their first years (Harris, 2015). School leaders may benefit

novice teachers by establishing a school culture that values collaboration and providing regular

feedback to aid growth and development. Such connections create a culture that values

teamwork, an atmosphere conducive to mentorship, and a comprehensive induction program that

relies heavily on cooperation with mentor teachers. Through a mentor, the school can further

support the growth and development of novice teachers while also helping new teachers

familiarize themselves with the profession (Harris, 2015; Ingersoll et al., 2014). Schools that

have shown stability in teacher retention possess a culture where the principal and teachers are

partners in teaching and learning while working together to promote school improvement and

student achievement (Ingersoll et al., 2014). When school leaders create a culture of

collaboration and support, particularly for novice teachers, there is a greater chance of retaining

this critical group of educators. Growing empirical evidence suggests that school leaders'

positive influence on staff creates a positive school culture (Debnam et al., 2021; De Smul et al.,

2020; Forfang & Paulsen, 2021). Research studies showed the significance of school leadership-

teacher collaboration in affecting school culture (Debnam et al., 2021; De Smul et al., 2020).

Mentors assigned to novice teachers can provide these teachers with the support necessary to

engage deeply in collaboration to promote growth. While engaging in partnerships with their

peers supports professional growth and development to meet the social and emotional needs

required for retention (Grissom et al., 2014; Harris, 2015).

Successful novice teacher retention has been noted to appear in highly collaborative

school cultures and within a school culture that provides formal and informal norms influencing

and governing the way individuals interact with each other (Whalen et al., 2019). A school's

culture must not only reflect the beliefs and values of the school but also allow mentorship of

novice teachers to be done in a way that supports the school's culture (Whalen et al., 2019).

Overall, there seems to be evidence indicating that school culture is essential but is overlooked

when exploring factors that impact teacher retention. A collaborative environment with mentorship and social norms governing how school-building members interact can create a cohesive school culture where all parties can grow.

Summary

Teacher retention, especially in novice teachers, has been an ever-growing problem in education. Novice teachers face many challenges that college coursework does not predict or adequately equip novice teachers (Çakmak et al., 2018; Gholam, 2018). For many reasons, even the most confident students who become teachers can experience diminished self-efficacy (Richards et al., 2014; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2021; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). With the changing faces of education, administrators, and those in close contact with novice teachers, play a crucial role in aiding growth and boosting self-efficacy through mentoring programs and fostering a school culture that supports the growth and development of the novice teacher (Barkley, 2013; Berkovich, 2018; Nuemann, 2018). Self-efficacy is the foundation from which many educators believe in the ability to conduct and complete a given task (Bandura, 1977b). As such, self-efficacy is vital in the educational realm to be fostered through relationships, guided by support and continued through experiences that contribute to a positive perception of the ability of teachers to make a difference in students' academic and personal growth (Bandura, 1977a). Thus, developing sound mentorship programs and positive relationships with administrators, colleagues, and students is critical for novice teachers to flourish and maintain the profession. Examining the problem of novice teacher retention aids in bridging the gap in the literature that needs to adequately explore the influence of leadership support systems in the lived experiences of educators.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. At this stage in the research, the retention influence of leadership support was generally defined as the systems available to novice teachers that raise levels of morality and motivation, influencing new teachers to continue in the education field (Burns, 1978). This qualitative research study sought to understand novice teachers' lived experiences through interviews, focus groups, and journal writing prompts. Participants for this study were teachers from a southeastern United States school district with five to seven years of experience. The data was analyzed using van Manen (1994) and bracketing, coding, and synthesis of meanings and essences. In further exploration of the research methods, this chapter explores the research design, research questions, participants, setting, procedures, researcher's role, data collection, data analysis process, trustworthiness, and a review of ethical considerations.

Research Design

A hermeneutic phenomenological design was used to examine the influence of leadership support on novice teacher retention. A qualitative method was most applied to this study because I sought to understand novice teachers' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). In addition, the qualitative process allows a deeper understanding of novice teachers and their perspectives on how educational leaders influence their self-efficacy by personally connecting with such participants and analyzing their perspectives, opinions, and beliefs to answer the central research question of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Previous research has examined perspectives of highly efficacious building-level leaders and their perceived influence on teacher

efficacy from a quantitative perspective (Hoxha & Hyseni-Duraku, 2017; Lambersky, 2016; Versland & Erikson, 2017). However, through a qualitative approach, this study expanded upon current research from a new vantage point, that of novice teachers and their lived experiences regarding administrative support and its influence on their career decisions. Through interviews, focus groups, and journal writing, these teachers' perspectives and experiences can be explored to find themes and resonating information previously overlooked in current literature, allowing for a clearer understanding of leaders' influence on novice teacher retention. Specifically, using hermeneutical phenomenology in this study allowed for interpreting and describing novice teachers' lived experiences using a discovery-oriented and interpretive focus, which considered me the instrument from which phenomena were evaluated. Furthermore, hermeneutical phenomenology allowed for identifying and understanding novice teachers' experiences through in-depth connection and communication (van Manen, 1994). As an educator, using van Manen's (1994) guide to investigating phenomena of the world as it is lived allowed for the recognition of reflective themes to emerge from which to examine participant themes and express such themes through written form balanced in contextual research.

Research Questions

The following questions examined novice teacher retention influenced by leadership support systems. These questions are grounded in SCT by applying behavioral, environmental, and social factors. In addition, these questions allowed for investigating the phenomena as they were lived by the participants (van Manen, 1994).

Central Research Question

How do educational leaders affect novice teacher retention?

Sub-Question One

How do behaviors of leaders affect novice teachers?

Sub-Question Two

How does the educational environment affect novice teachers?

Sub-Question Three

How do cognitive factors affect novice teachers?

Setting and Participants

This section describes the setting where this study took place and the rationale for selecting the site. In addition, detailed information concerning the study participants' criteria is provided in narrative form and includes general information about age, gender, ethnicity, and experience relevant to the site and study. This section begins with the setting exploration followed by the sought participants' descriptions.

Setting

Due to this study's focus on novice teachers and their perceptions of leaders influencing their teacher self-efficacy, I needed to utilize a district with a high teacher turnover rate. In doing so, I was led to a rural school district in the southeastern United States with over 15,000 students and 100% of the schools being Title I (GaDOE, 2019). This district has a significant teacher turnover rate, requiring the hiring of novice teachers throughout the school year. Specifically, elementary-level schools in this district experience a teacher shortage with high teacher turnover. In addition, this study site experiences various demographic challenges. Participants from this study came from across the 14 elementary schools within this school district. The school district is 100% economically disadvantaged. The student population is 88.6% Black, 5.8% White, and 5.6% identifying as more than one race or other races (GaDOE, 2019). According to the

Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2019), most of the county's students performed at a beginning level in all state standardized assessments. This study site has underperformed compared with the state averages in all academic areas (Georgia School Reports, 2019). Since novice teachers are known to experience dilemmas in classroom management, lack of confidence, and lack of parental involvement (Ford et al., 2019), these challenges, coupled with a struggling demographic, made it a unique place to understand novice teacher retention as influenced by leadership support systems.

Participants

The novice teacher participants for this study were teachers with no more than five years of teaching experience employed in one of 14 elementary schools in a rural South Georgia school district. Criterion sampling was used to select participants, which will allow me to choose participants through a set of criteria that ensures participants have experienced a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were required to have no more than five years of experience teaching and teaching at one of the district's 14 elementary schools. Participants were recruited via an email forwarded by the elementary school administrators. The recruitment email explained the purpose of the research and the opportunities for participation. This process allowed me to gather the necessary data to collect relevant information related to novice teachers' lived experiences.

Researcher's Positionality

My motivation for the study came from personal experiences as a once-novice teacher. As an educator of ten years and an aspiring leader, I know firsthand the influence of a leader on teachers' self-efficacy. My first years in education were similar to the struggles shared collectively by first-year teachers; however, my principal's influence greatly impacted my beliefs

as a novice teacher. I can recall specific moments early on in my teaching career when I was not confident I had made the right choice. Still, I remember hearing how important I was as an educator and the difference I could make in students' lives if I continued my career choice. Through words of affirmation and constant support, I became the successful educator I am today. However, I do understand that everyone's experiences are different. By exploring novice teachers' perspectives in this study, I recognized that my personal experiences may lead to a presumption of positive first-year teaching experiences for my participants. In preparation for such recognition of potential bias, I bracketed to reduce the effect of my experiences in the data collection and analysis processes (van Manen, 1994). Through this phenomenological study, I aimed to understand the influence of leadership support on novice teacher retention.

Interpretive Framework

Researchers often bring a deep-rooted personal philosophy to research through schema, education, and assumptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since constructivist inquiry explains the researcher's desire to understand realities from the perspectives of those who have experienced them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994), such inquiry was a fit for examining novice teacher retention. In examining novice teacher retention relating to leadership support, data saturation was required to explore the lived experiences particular to the phenomenon, especially with the perspective of constructivism that posits knowledge is developed from the lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within this study and through constructivist inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I became involved with the participants using open-ended questions that allowed me to understand their realities in doing so, using the constructivist paradigm as this study's interpretive framework aided in understanding how

leadership support affects novice teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes, and perception of social norms to retain novice teachers in the education field.

Philosophical Assumptions

Examining leadership support in novice teacher retention required me to embody openness and consciousness in recognizing personal bias and assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a previous novice teacher and now a veteran teacher, my experiences could vastly differ from those of my participants. Responsively, using reflexivity in recognizing my personal experiences, beliefs, and assumptions aided in developing a more robust representation of the lived experiences of my participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Further, practicing flexibility and transparency was essential as a researcher to ensure my participants' experiences were accurately portrayed. Finally, applying the concept of bracketing to set aside personal experiences and assumptions (Moustakas, 1994) aided in developing a more robust understanding of the phenomenon through the lived experiences of my participants. Overall, examining my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions clarified my position as a researcher of this phenomenon.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions guide how researchers explain reality (Moustakas, 1994). Ontological assumptions are based on the researchers' assumptions of the nature of reality and its features (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this study, I possess my views of reality and truth. My ontological assumption is that leadership does play a key role in teacher retention and novice teacher self-efficacy. However, I understand that the participants in my study may not feel the same way. Therefore, I used bracketing to separate my beliefs in this study (Moustakas, 1994) and guide a more robust and precise understanding of the actual realities of my participants.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption speaks to what counts as knowledge, how these claims are justified, and the relationship between what is being researched and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within this study, the participants communicate their experiences within the teaching field as their knowledge of the phenomenon being explored. Since my participants shared their experiences and relayed such knowledge to me, the knowledge was viewed as created by them. Since I have also been a novice teacher with my own experiences with leadership support, I sought to become close to my participants as they shared their experiences; however, I worked to bracket my personal and professional experiences to report and examine only that of my participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This study was subjective because each participant possesses their own experience with the phenomena being studied.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions consider the role of values that shape an interpretation of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a once-novice teacher who experienced leadership support, I acknowledged that my values fall within the perceived value of leadership, relationships, and self-efficacy. As a current teacher, I contended that self-efficacy drives perseverance in education, specifically under challenging moments. As the human instrument, I could not wholly eliminate my experiences in reporting the phenomenon of my participants. However, I sought to bracket my perspectives and experiences (Moustakas, 1994) as I collected, analyzed, and reported the lived experiences of my participants.

Researcher's Role

In my experiences as a teacher in a school district with a low socioeconomic status, I witnessed numerous educators leave the profession. From my observation, teachers often choose

to leave after becoming overwhelmed, feeling underappreciated, and developing concerns about the career field decision. While I have worked in the school district being investigated within this study, my personal career experiences, support systems, and dedication have been directly affected by positive leadership support that has improved my self-efficacy. Responsively, I understand that each educator then experiences a differing perspective on the importance and influential value of leadership, which may affect their self-efficacy.

As the human instrument in this hermeneutical phenomenological study examining leadership support systems that affect novice teacher self-efficacy, I recognized that my personal experiences may influence the interpretation of the collected data from my participants. In recognition of my researcher role, I aimed to set aside personal biases, goals, and intentions to accurately report the research participants' experiences (Patton, 2015). I did so through bracketing and memoing (Moustakas, 1994). As an ethical researcher, I followed the qualitative research guidelines in collecting data in a natural setting using multiple data collection methods, exploring the participant experiences, meaning, and reflexivity to aid in exploring the interpretation of the information (Creswell, 2018). Even further, while I hold no authority over my participants, I ensured that potential participants understood that their role was purely voluntary and that there would be no repercussions or advances in their careers resulting from the decision to participate. Furthermore, participants were informed that their choice to terminate their role in the study would be received without any repercussions in exploring leadership support's influence on novice teacher retention.

Procedures

The procedures for understanding leadership support's influence on novice teacher retention are explored in this section to showcase the specific mechanics and data management

processes for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, this section outlines the permissions process, participant recruitment, and data collection plans. Finally, the method for data analysis and triangulation will be presented.

Data Collection Plan

Data collection serves to be one of the most critical parts of any research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The bracketing process is essential to phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). This step of data collection was imperative for me to become more aware of personal biases to recognize them better during data collection (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, bracketing allowed me to explore the data by avoiding judgment and separating my experiences to find underlying themes and patterns in the participants' lived experiences (Patton, 2015). Using a reflexive journal aided in this process of identifying my thoughts and feelings throughout the data collection. The data collection included interviews, a focus group, and lettering writing. The triangulation of data collection will aid in exploring the participants' lived experiences, guiding more robust reliability of the identified themes and codes that emerged from the study findings as I interpreted them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lewis, 2015; Patton, 2015).

Individual Interviews

Interviews allowed me to understand participants' experiences in their own words (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were conducted with at least 12-15 participants one-on-one in either a virtual or in-person setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), from which the participant guided the location selection. In addition, the semi-structured process of the interviews aided in the depth of exploration of the participants' experiences through follow-up questions or probes as they emerged during the discussion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, memoing allowed

me to note the thoughts or feelings I experienced during the interview to aid in the bracketing process (Patton, 2015).

Before asking the interview questions, participants were told that the 45-minute interview consisting of 14 semi-structured questions was audio recorded. Participants signed a consent form before the interview and were provided a copy of their files. At the same time, during the interviewing process, I took notes about non-verbal communication since communication can be shared via non-verbal messages (Edwards et al., 2020) to ensure an accurate interpretation of their lived experiences is produced. I informed participants that the information from the interview would be stored on a password-protected device under a pseudonym, available only to me for three years, and then destroyed. This process aided in protecting the confidentiality of each participant while adhering to the ethical standards of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Table 1

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position. CRQ

2. What skills have educational leaders modeled for you? SQ1

3. What instructional strategies have educational leaders modeled for you? SQ1

4. What classroom practices have you implemented from collaboration with colleagues? SQ1

5. What has contributed to your perseverance in teaching so far? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3

6. What has shaped your expectations of yourself as a teacher? SQ2

7. What has influenced your attitudes toward your teaching career? SQ2

8. How have leaders influenced your teaching career? SQ2

9. What personal development has influenced perseverance in your teaching career? SQ2

10. What influences your classroom practices? SQ3

11. How would you describe the accessibility of educational leaders? SQ3

12. How would you characterize your autonomy in the classroom? SQ3

13. How has your educational community influenced your perseverance in your teaching career? SQ3

14. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your perseverance in the teaching career that we have not yet discussed? CRQ

Focus Groups

After the individual interviews were conducted and analyzed, participants were invited to engage in a focus group. Focus groups allow participants to examine the phenomenon and share additional experiences from scaffolded discussion ideas (Patton, 2015). The focus group interview consisted of five to eight participants in either a virtual or face-to-face setting, as determined by the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The focus group lasted no longer than 90 minutes, and the participants were asked six semi-structured questions after signing a consent form presented at the meeting. A copy of the consent form was shared with each participant for their files. Six questions were asked during the focus group to encourage participant discussion and allow follow-up or probing questions to dive deeper into the participant's experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were notified that the focus group was recorded and stored on a password-protected device for three years and then destroyed. I practiced memoing to note any thoughts and feelings experienced during the focus group to aid in bracketing (Patton, 2015). Finally, manually recording non-verbal communication

and key terms during the focus group process added insight into the shared participant experiences.

Table 2

Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe a successful teacher? SQ1

2. What is the biggest challenge in teaching? SQ2

3. Describe a validating moment in your teaching career. SQ2

4. How has a professional development experience changed your teaching effectiveness? SQ2 & SQ3

5. What is your proudest moment in teaching? SQ1,2, &3

Journal Prompts

Participants were invited to complete journal prompts exploring their experiences as novice educators. Participants were encouraged to answer the journal prompts honestly and thoughtfully. By reading the journal prompts, a triangulation system emerged that increased the reliability of the themes and codes that arose from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Even further, data collected outside of the interview and focus group process aided in capturing a more in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of novice teachers. Five to eight participants participated in the journal writing. Participants journaling were provided a Survey Monkey website link to write and submit their journaling thoughts. Electronic submission allowed for confidentially, formatting consistency, and readability while allowing submissions to be convenient for participants. The Survey Monkey data was password-protected and only accessible to me as the researcher.

Table 3

Journal Writing Prompts

1. How has your vision of being an educator been influenced over time?

2. What aspects of teaching do you wish educational leaders knew about you?

3. How have you overcome challenges you have faced during your teaching career?

4. How have you made the biggest difference in your school?

5. What about teaching scares you? Why?

Data Analysis

Synthesizing the collected data from the interviews, focus group, and journals was the final step in the data analysis process. In doing so, I followed Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological analysis process to examine the collected experience data and synthesize the themes and codes. I used bracketing as the first step of the data analysis and synthesis process to aid in preparing to find new knowledge by setting aside predispositions and prejudices that allowed events and people to come into cognizance as new beginnings (Moustakas, 1994). As a current educator in the district where this study took place, I must set aside my previous experiences and identified my personal biases about the topic of study. So, using reflexivity, I recorded my thoughts, feelings, and ideas throughout the study to further allow me to recognize my teaching experiences and how they may affect my interpretation of the data. In addition to reflexivity, I used reduction to identify further personal biases and aid in reviewing data without preconceived notions or judgments (Moustakas, 1994).

Next, I examined the data by reading transcriptions and listening to audio recordings to identify commonalities among the data collected. Using structural descriptions, the method for describing how participants experience the phenomenon, and textural descriptions, the process of

explaining what was shared by the participants, allowed for meaning to develop (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). After re-reading the data, horizontalization occurred by identifying the common themes among the data set (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, I created meaning from the data through imaginative variation by recording patterns, seeking themes, and considering the possible textural meaning in the data transcriptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Finally, an interpretation of the finding's summarization was used to compare to the current literature and develop a discussion of the essence of the interpreted findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process examining the individual interviews followed a systematic approach that aided in developing emerging themes and codes. The process began with preparing the data for analysis by transcribing each interview recording immediately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By manually transcribing the interviews, I had a more robust engagement with the participants' experiences, allowing me to identify thematic phrases and words. Each participant was then be provided a transcription of their interview to check for accuracy and support additional validity of the study's findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data was then coded and labeled to begin grouping (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Following the grouping process, a compilation of codes was developed to examine for redundancy and aid in developing themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, the assignment of codes and themes was prepared to allow the flow of the ideas presented (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) while crafting a narrative from the transcribed material.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process examining the focus group interviews followed a systematic

approach that aided in developing emerging themes and codes. The process began with preparing the data for analysis by transcribing the focus group data recording immediately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By manually transcribing the focus group, I had a more robust engagement with the participants' experiences, allowing me to identify thematic phrases and words. Each participant was provided a focus group transcription to check for accuracy and support additional validity of the study's findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data was coded and labeled to begin grouping (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Following the grouping process, a compilation of codes was developed to examine for redundancy and aid in developing themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, the assignment of codes and themes was prepared to allow the flow of the ideas presented (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) while crafting a narrative from the transcribed material.

Journal-Writing Data Analysis Plan

Since the journals were collected in typed form, this data collection process did not require manual transcription. However, a method for preparing the data for analysis was followed by carefully reading each letter and merging the letters into one document (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Next, using member checking to support the study's credibility was implemented through follow-up questions or requests for clarity in the participants' written messages (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data was coded and labeled to begin grouping (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Following the grouping process, a compilation of codes was developed to examine for redundancy and aid in developing themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, the assignment of codes and themes was prepared to allow the flow of the ideas presented (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) while crafting a narrative from the transcribed material.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research often raises questions about the validity, reliability, and credibility of study findings due to the perceived limitations of rigor, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Due to the questions raised, qualitative studies must include detailed steps to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Trustworthiness begs to question the importance of the research and convinces the intended audience to pay attention to the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, detailed criteria are needed to meet the intended level of trustworthiness. These criteria are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

First, I took the steps outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to increase the credibility of this study's findings through member checking and triangulation. Using member checking allowed me to explore the authenticity of the data with the study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Member checking was embedded into each data collection method after the transcription of the interviews and focus group and the analysis of the journal writing. As the human instrument of this study, I understood that my bias and previous experiences affected my interpretation of the data. Thus, member checking aided in the credibility of my understanding of each participant's lived experience.

Triangulation was another method used in this study to increase credibility by examining the data for consistent themes within the responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). In addition, using triangulation allowed for the illumination of differences in the same participant's perspectives and led to additional questioning to understand the differences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015), further developing the study's trustworthiness. Finally, using three

data collection methods, interviews, focus group, and journal writing, allowed consistency in data themes to emerge and aid in the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability aided in developing a trustworthy study by showing the applicability of the findings in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, using thick and rich descriptions of the findings aided in the transferability of the study to other educational systems, exploring the lived experiences of novice teacher retention. Even further, using a system of bracketing and memoing supported the necessary recognition of my personal biases and assumptions and how they may affect the interpretation of the findings (Moustakas, 1994). While such a state of experiential and non-bias interpretation is almost unachievable, it is a crucial beginning step when collecting transferable, trustworthy data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Dependability

Aiding the trustworthiness of my research required a consideration of the dependability of consistent and repeatable findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, I took detailed and thorough notes throughout the data collection process to support the dependability process. In addition, all interview and focus group sessions were audio recorded on multiple devices while I took handwritten notes supporting the verbal message. Further, direct quotes were used in presenting findings within the study to give life to the research and ensure a voice is given to the participants. Finally, my committee thoroughly reviewed my study procedures and processes.

Confirmability

Finally, confirmability was achieved in this study by ensuring the findings represent the participants' lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In achieving confirmability, I used external audits completed by individuals not involved in the study to confirm that conclusions

are corroborated by the data and are not affected by the researcher's bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was also embedded in the data collection and analysis to explore consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, a method of reflexivity was used in a system of bracketing, note-taking, and memoing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The processes aided in setting aside personal biases, goals, and intentions to accurately report the research participants' experiences while supporting a system of trustworthiness within the study (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an essential aspect of any research involving participants. First, IRB approval was gained through Liberty University before any data-driven element of this study was conducted. A consent form was given to participants that explained the study, what the study involved, and any potential risks associated with the investigation. The consent form explained that all information shared with the researcher will be confidential, aligning with the ethical qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, participants could remove themselves from the study without concern for personal, professional, or social consequences. Participants who left the study were informed that their information would be removed. In addition, throughout the data collection process, participants were addressed with respect and appreciation for their participation. All notes and audio recordings are kept on a password-protected device and destroyed after three years. Even further, reflexivity notations collected during the study are held in a locked filing cabinet made only accessible to me and destroyed after three years. Such procedures, aligned with the ethical qualitative research process and Liberty University's ethical code, aided in developing an ethical study examining the lived experiences of novice teacher retention.

Permissions

The procedures necessary to conduct this study began with applying for and receiving

IRB approval (see Appendix A) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After receiving IRB approval, I asked

for formal permission to complete my study through the school district's human resources

department via an email (see Appendix B) explaining the purpose, research plans, and

participants needed. Attached to the email, I requested the formal approval to be signed and

returned to me (see Appendix C). I began my participant recruitment after receiving formal

approval from the district's human resources office.

Other Participant Protections

I requested the support of school principals. First, I obtained the elementary school

principals' emails from the school's websites and constructed an email to principals explaining

the purpose of my study and the needed participants while attaching my recruitment letter to the

message. Next, I asked them to forward the recruitment letter to their faculty to solicit

participants (see Appendix D). After two weeks, a follow-up recruitment email was sent to

potential participants (see Appendix E). The first 12 – 15 participants who met the participation

criteria will be selected for the study, which is convenience sampling. Before collecting any data,

participants signed and returned the consent form (see Appendix F). Participants were told and

understood they could leave the study at any time without penalty or concern for professional or

professional adverse actions. If a participant decided to leave the study, their data was destroyed

and not utilized in the study data.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of

leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. Through

these explained data collection methods, gathering content-rich data through interviews, focus groups, and reflective letters, an accurate data picture was created to understand the lived experiences of my participants. Furthermore, utilizing the trustworthiness processes that integrated credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical practices guided a more robust understanding of the influence leadership support has on novice teacher retention.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a rural southeastern United States school district. Chapter four describes the participants in narrative and table format. The themes, including support, self-efficacy, school culture, and relationships, are presented in narrative form to demonstrate how each was derived from data sources. Relevant excerpts that created the themes and subthemes connected with the central research question and sub-questions are included. Outlier data is discussed as it pertains to the data collection findings. Participants' responses to each research question are presented. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited using the processes outlined in Chapter three. After obtaining IRB approval and approval from the school district, emails were sent to principals of elementary schools to potential participants. Following this, criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was used to reach the desired number of participants who met the specified criteria. After reading about its purpose, many participants were willing to participate in my study. One participant expressed, "Your study's purpose is valuable, and I want to be a part of this. I want to share with the education community how important leaders are in the career development of novice teachers." Another participant emailed expressing his interest in participating in this study because "I was one of the novice teachers who wanted to quit, but a change made a world of difference in my experience, and I decided to stay." Participants in this

study taught in grades kindergarten through fifth. Table four summarizes the participant

demographics, including age, race, gender, years of teaching, and grade level.

Table 4

Participants Demographics

Participant	Age	Race	Gender	Years Taught	Grade Level	Highest Degree Earned
Mandy	45	Caucasian	Female	5	2nd	Masters
Rachel	38	Caucasian	Female	1	2nd	Bachelors
Alicia	30	African American	Female	5	3rd	Masters
Linda	48	African American	Female	1	Kindergarten	Bachelors
James	37	African American	Male	4	Physical Education	Bachelors
Gerald	26	African American	Male	3	5th	Masters
Jaliah	28	African American	Female	4	3rd	Specialist
Bernice	28	African American	Female	2	Kindergarten	Bachelors
Katie	26	Caucasian	Female	1	4th	Masters
Tasha	29	African American	Female	3	4th	Bachelors
Angela	25	Caucasian	Female	1	1st	Bachelors
April	32	Caucasian	Female		3rd	Bachelors

Mandy

Mandy, a 45-year-old White female, was initially a stay-at-home mom, but once her

children were school-aged, she opted to return to school to obtain her teaching degree. She began

her teaching career five years ago at the age of 40. Before being a teacher, she worked in a

factory but expressed a real passion for her career, calling it "what I should have been doing all

along." Her personality was one of taking life's challenges calmly. She expressed being drawn to those who enjoy collaboration and offer support in times of struggle, whether curriculum-based, student-based, or dealing with a difficult parent. She shared, "Comradery is very important in teaching, and I think that has helped me the most, realizing we are all in this together and working for the same goal of making the future better." Mandy was excited about her future in education and showed enthusiasm about her current experience as a novice teacher.

Rachel

Rachel is a White, 38-year-old first-year teacher. Rachel's previous experiences include many travel and adventure jobs. She has worked with children through recreational sports, but the formal classroom setting is new. Her experience was unique in that she was one of six new teachers in her building this year and one of the only participants in this situation. Having entered the teaching profession through alternative means, she had struggled to balance learning how to be a teacher and preparing for teacher preparation exams within the same year. She noted during our interview, "My mentor teacher was my saving grace. Having her in my classroom and collaborating with her daily was something I never took for granted. She is the reason I survived being a first-year teacher."

Alicia

Alicia is a thirty-year-old Black female. She is a fifth-year teacher who recently shifted from kindergarten to third grade. From our interaction, Alicia needed support and friendship to feel comfortable even though she had been teaching longer than other participants. During the interview, Alicia discussed her educational community's influence on the perseverance she has for reaching. She stated:

I consider myself an integral aspect of my educational community. While I need

collaboration and camaraderie, I also have found the importance of believing in myself.

Teaching is not an easy profession, and the daily demands do not let up, but knowing and

believing that I can do this, and I was made to do this, shapes my will and determination

to be the best I possibly can be for my students every day.

Linda

Linda is a 48-year-old Black woman and a first-year kindergarten teacher who began her

teaching career later in life. For 21 years, she has been a paraprofessional in many different grade

levels, but recently, she completed her teaching degree and accepted a position to teach

Kindergarten. She was open about her struggles as a novice teacher. Linda shared her fears of

feeling inadequate sharing, "I often allow comparison to get the best of me when I feel like I do

not measure up. My building has created a culture of competition rather than of comradery and

support." Linda expressed passion for her position in teaching kindergarten and communicated

that she wanted to be the best teacher for her students. However, Linda discussed that the lack of

support and guidance in curriculum development affects her self-efficacy within her role.

James

James is a Black male who is 37 years old. He is a physical education teacher for grades

kindergarten through fifth. James is a fourth-year teacher who has held his position at the same

school for all four years. He is the only participant who did not teach a core content area. Being

one of only two male participants, James was excited to share his perspective and experiences

during our focus group. James shared his thoughts on the current state of professional

development within the school district:

Professional development should be exactly what the name says, development of me as a

professional. Since starting my career, I have never left a professional development

session feeling any more prepared for my daily tasks than I did before the professional

development session. It is almost as though these are done to check a box and say we

have supported our teachers somehow when they waste our time.

Professional development tailored to the specific needs of educators was a strong passion

described by James.

Gerald

Gerald is a 26-year-old Black male and a third-year fifth-grade teacher. Although Gerald

discusses history as a true passion, he is responsible for teaching social studies. Gerald

transitioned mid-year from teaching at the high school level to the elementary classroom. He

shared that he was unhappy in his previous setting and felt shut down at every turn. Gerald

communicated his drive for participating as valuing the study's purpose and being moved to

share his experience. Gerald was motivated to communicate how leaders have influenced his

teaching career:

In more ways than an hour interview could probably allow. However, I will share it in the

simple version; I wanted to quit. Leaders at my previous school made me want to turn my

back on what I loved. They were calloused and unapproachable; they created a culture

that made teachers hate teaching. I dreaded going to work every day; it showed in my

work and dedication to my students. I was not happy, and I knew I needed a change.

Now, I work with a leadership team that pours into me, encourages me, and fosters my

desire to move up the ladder, and I am excited to learn from them. They willingly share

knowledge with me and genuinely want me to succeed. My entire perspective has

changed for the better.

Jaliah

Jaliah was the participant who held the highest level of education, a specialist degree in

early childhood education. She is a 28-year-old Black female and a fourth-year third-grade

teacher. She teaches at a school with constant vacancies, and at the start of this study, her school

currently had eight teaching vacancies for the coming school year. During her interview, she

shared the critical importance of believing in yourself as a teacher or self-efficacy:

> Teaching is not easy; there are daily things that could make me question why I do this
>
> every single day. I have people who often ask me why you are a teacher. However, I look
>
> deep into myself, knowing I was made to do this. There are challenges, and things may
>
> get hard, but I love teaching, and I do this daily because I know I can do it.

Highlighting the importance of self-efficacy was a crucial part of her interview, leading

to additional conversations about how leadership impacts self-efficacy. Jaliah was also

concerned about how leadership power influences self-efficacy, "Although self-efficacy is about

self, it is impacted by outside people and forces. Through their words and actions, leadership can

tear down or build up self-efficacy in a single second."

Bernice

Bernice, a 28-year-old Black woman, is a first-year kindergarten teacher. While she has

been teaching for two years, her first year was mostly spent on maternity leave, so this past year

was her first full, uninterrupted year in the classroom. As a first-year teacher, her experiences

have been shaped by those who have supported her in the classroom. Collaboration was a very

prominent theme within all her responses:

Collaboration has aided me in becoming a better teacher. It took me a little while to get

comfortable with my colleagues, asking for support and sharing my ideas. Still, I realized

I was only as good as my minimal knowledge without collaboration. Through

collaboration, I have been able to grow and better impact my students.

Educational change is often a challenge for Bernice. She mentioned, "I often feel comfortable

with one area of curriculum, but then as soon as I do, it will change. I wish more things were

consistent in education for not only students but educators as well."

Katie

Katie is a 26-year-old White female and a fourth-grade teacher. As a fourth-grade

teacher, Katie teaches all subject areas. She relies heavily on her team's abilities, aiding her

success in the classroom. Katie is one of two newer teachers in her grade level employed at a

school with low turnover. She joined a team of:

…veteran teachers that lead with a true sense of relationship and comradery. We work

well together, and I can be myself around her. She has helped shape me into the teacher I

am right now, and I know that if we continue to work together, I will continue to grow

into an even better teacher.

Tasha

Tasha is a 29-year-old Black female. She has taught for three years and is currently a

fourth-grade teacher in her first year at a new school teaching all subject areas. During our

interview, she shared that her primary reason for leaving her previous school was "…the lack of

support; I never felt supported in my classroom or as a teacher. Leadership made me feel like I

was against the world and isolated and alone. Good teaching cannot happen that way." During

our focus group, she openly shared her struggles with the group. Many participants agreed with

her, "…support is crucial in the growth and development of new teachers. We need to feel supported by our administrative team, not just our colleagues".

Angela

Angela is a 25-year-old White female who teaches Kindergarten at one of the more successful schools in the district. She is newly graduated and did her student teaching in a second-grade classroom. So, while she was in second-grade for student teaching, she shared, "Teaching and owning a kindergarten classroom is a lot within itself. Kindergarteners are busy little people, and learning to teach and manage them has been a lot." She presents herself as very bubbly and energetic. Angela was eager to be in a focus group and connect with other teachers.

April

April, a 32-year-old White female, teaches third grade. She has been teaching for three years and at the same school for all three of her years. During our interview, April was timid and reserved. However, once we established rapport, she opened up about her experiences as a novice teacher and was full of information. Like other participants, April shared that she started her teaching career in the middle of the year. Beginning in the middle of a year and coming in after another teacher has set rituals and routines presented different challenges that still resonate with her in her classroom today. She discussed how difficult it was to establish relationships with her students and colleagues because of the time she entered the school culture, "I was an outsider to everyone [and] it was hard to find my place and where I fit in because relationships had already been established."

Results

Initial first-round coding was conducted on all data quantities to permit triangulation across data sources. The participant interview transcripts produced over 400 codes, and the focus

group transcripts produced similar codes to the interview transcripts. The codes gleaned through the coding process of participant interviews were found consistently through the coding process of the focus group without presenting any newly formed codes. The journal prompts produced 60 codes. No matter where novice teachers were in their careers or how they entered the profession, prominent themes presented themselves by discussing the participants' experiences over time. The relevant themes related to the research questions, striking quotes, and related codes are presented in this section (see Table 6), followed by narrative accounts of themes and relevant subthemes of this study.

Table 5

Themes Gleaned Across Data Sources

Theme	Subthemes		
Support	Mentor Programs	Professional Development	Modeling
Self-efficacy			
School Culture			
Relationships	Relationships with Colleagues	Relationships with Students	

Support

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, it became evident how important administrators' support is in the careers of novice teachers. Participants all agreed that support has been critical in their success and retention in their teaching careers. One participant, Gerald, noted the difference administration's support can make in a novice teacher's experiences:

"At my first school, I struggled. My administration was not supportive. They were not present, and I honestly felt like I was alone. I did not know that I was going to keep teaching because I am not the type of person who can work well in isolation. I knew something needed to change. At my current school, it is a completely different world. My administration is supportive, they are present, and I never have to ask for their help, they readily offer it to me. I never feel alone or judged, I am free to ask questions and be vulnerable and I am a better teacher because of it."

Participants agreed that support comes in many different forms, but for them, the most beneficial has been through some professional development sessions, modeling of expected practices, and administrators being willing to help and go the extra mile for their teachers.

Mentor Programs

A subtheme of mentoring and mentor programs came to light from the overall theme of support. Participants shared collective thoughts that mentors and mentoring programs can provide space for new teachers to learn from veteran teachers, develop confidence, and add strategies to their teaching toolboxes. Linda shared, "Having a mentor has been amazing in my first year of teaching. My mentor has provided me with guidance, encouragement, and support when I needed it the most." Katie shared in our interview:

My mentor has been an incredible resource for me during my first of teaching. She has provided me with invaluable advice and support and has helped me navigate the various challenges that come with being a new teacher. I'm not sure I would have made it through this year without her guidance and encouragement. I feel incredibly fortunate to have her as my mentor and am grateful for all she has done for me.

Professional Development

A subtheme of support was found to be professional development. Professional development can be seen as both a constructive experience and an experience that is not always beneficial. Participants in this study noted both sides of this argument. During our interview, Jaliah shared:

> Professional development and professional learning communities have been impactful for me and my classroom. I have become a better teacher because of them. I am able to collaborate and receive support from teachers who are doing the same things I am every day." Many participants noted the same feelings as Jaliah, professional development provides additional extensions of support outside of their buildings.

James, a physical education teacher, brought up a counterpoint in discussing professional development:

> Professional development sometimes takes away from my time in the classroom. It is not always conducive to schedules and at times, provides additional tasks and stresses to an already full plate. I have found myself having a love-hate relationship with the mandatory professional learning sessions, rather than being able to explore options on my own. Participants shared sentiments much the same. Mandy shared:
> Professional development has its place in our growth as teachers. There are those courses that are just necessary, and then there are those that really speak to our souls as new teachers. I find myself leaving those that really speak to my soul as a new teacher refreshed and ready to face the next day. Those are the ones I really wish we had more of.

Modeling

Another important subtheme of support was modeling. This arose from many participants' individual interviews and our focus group. It is important to note that many participants shared their administrators' willingness to model lessons within their classroom and how administrators modeled their expectations of their teachers. Bernice shared her experience by saying:

I was really struggling with how a certain block of my day should look. I know most people think kindergarten is a walk in the park, but when I shared my concerns with my principal, he came in and modeled the entire block for me. He ensured the expectations were clear for me and allowed me to ask questions as he worked through certain parts. I felt seen, and it is a day that still stands out to me from this year.

April shared similar thoughts, much like Bernice's experience:

My principal has never hesitated to model anything for me. While she is clear she is no language arts guru, she came in and modeled a writing lesson using our new writing curriculum from start to finish. Seeing her set aside her schedule to help a new teacher like me showed how much she valued my growth and wanted me to succeed.

Self-Efficacy

Within this study, participants in both individual interviews and the focus group referred to self-efficacy often. Self-efficacy revealed itself in words and phrases such as, "believing in myself," "knowing I can do this," "perseverance," and never giving up.

Rachel shared her thoughts on self-efficacy during our individual interview:

Some days are just hard. Teaching is hard, and it does not get easier as the years seem to go by, so you have to believe in yourself. There are days that I have to tell myself, I can

do this. I can do hard things, and when things don't go well, I will tell myself to just try again tomorrow. Believing in myself has sometimes been the driving force that gets me out of bed in the morning.

During our focus group self-efficacy was noted more than once, in both positive and negative environments. For many participants, self-efficacy was easiest when the environment was positive and inviting, but when the environment was challenging, self-efficacy was rattled. Alicia offered an example of her self-efficacy being rattled by a negative school culture:

It was hard to believe in myself when the school didn't seem to believe in anything. It seemed as though everything was bad, the principal was breathing down our backs about test scores, and being new I didn't have all the strategies in my toolbox. I felt outnumbered and beat down every day, it was hard to believe this was for me and I could do it.

School Culture

School culture, climate, and the school environment were also common themes within this study. Participants discussed how the "feel" of a school can impact those who walk its halls. Katie expressed:

A positive school culture had a huge impact on me as a teacher. The feel of the building made me want to come to work every day. Everyone was happy, from leadership all the way to students. Everyone wanted to be in the building, and that energy was contagious. I may not have been the best teacher, but I felt like I was on top of the world.

Linda echoed Katie's sentiments and expounded on them:

When you walk into a building, you can just feel if it is a positive place or not. Culture is

contagious, both positive and negative. A positive school culture is a place where

everyone can grow and be their best selves."

Gerald also noted the opposite, a negative school culture, and how it impacts novice teachers.

I've worked in a place where no one wanted to be at work, not even the principal. It

seemed as though nothing was positive in the school and from the moment you hit the

front door, the feel of the school was just off. I was not my best self at that particular

school, and I was not the best teacher for my students. I suffered tremendously, but I

really didn't know just how much it affected my work until I worked in a place with a

positive school culture.

Relationships

Relationships emerged as a theme from codes such as friendship, family, collegiality,

comradery, and relationships with students. With the participants, relationships encompassed

both their relationships with their colleagues and the relationships they have in their classrooms

with their students. Relationships proved to be an integral part of their days and their

perseverance within the teaching profession. Mandy shared during our interview:

Relationships are the core of my success. I have the best relationships with those I come

in contact with daily. I love my students like they are my own, and my colleagues have

turned into some of my closest friends.

Relationships with Colleagues

One aspect of relationships that arose as a subtheme was relationships with colleagues.

Participants often referred to their colleagues as an extension of their family and friends, and

great resources for their classroom. Alicia discussed her relationship with her colleagues in the most favorable light:

> My colleagues have been integral in my classroom and in my life. They provide support, encouragement, boosts of confidence, teaching strategies, share resources, and come to my rescue any time I need them. They have supported me immensely since the first day I walked in the door and our relationship has grown every day since. I am a better teacher because I work with them.

April shared similar sentiments about her colleagues:

> My coworkers are almost like an extension of my family. I credit them with so much of my success because they have willingly shared strategies and resources with me. They have cried with me when things were difficult and picked me up when I needed it most.

While all participants spoke of their current colleagues in a positive light, there were a few who spoke of the contrary in their previous school settings. Gerald, who moved to a new school, shared of his previous colleagues:

> They mirrored the administration. They were isolated and cold. They didn't want to welcome anyone new, and they didn't want to share resources. It was every man for themselves, and being new, I struggled with that.

Like Gerald, Bernice shared that her initial experiences with her colleagues were similar:

> I had to be patient and get to know them. It wasn't that they weren't welcoming. However, it wasn't all roses initially. We had to learn one another, and being new, I had to figure out where I fit in. While they were not mean, they were not overly welcoming either, and some days that was a challenge.

Relationships with Students

Another integral piece of relationships was the subtheme of relationships with students. Teachers spend most of their day with their students, and relationships have proven to be necessary. Throughout interviews, our focus group, and journal prompts, students were mentioned over 200 times, making them an essential piece of the puzzle. Jaliah said, "My students are why I became a teacher, even those who present a challenge daily. If I didn't have relationships with them, my job would be in vain." Participants in our focus group applauded that statement. Bernice chimed in and shared, "I love my students like my own children. I work hard to treat them as I want someone to treat my child. They make my job enjoyable, even on the hard days. They are my why."

Students rely on their teachers to provide not only instruction but also a safe place for them. Mandy wrote in her journal:

> Because of our demographics, my students rely on me for so many things. I am a parent, a teacher, a counselor, a nurse, a friend, and a confidant, the list is endless. I wish leaders knew the burdens we carry as teachers for our students.

Relationships with students are a critical piece in the relationships novice teachers form and one aspect that is important to them.

Research Question Responses

Interview, focus group questions, and journal prompts aligned to provide thematic data on the original research questions guiding this hermeneutic phenomenological study. The four themes initially established are aligned below, fitting with the research question they support. Some themes bleed into more than one question because of the nature of their meaning. Each question has associated themes discussed below.

Central Research Question

How do educational leaders affect novice teacher retention? The retention of novice teachers is a central concern within the field of education, and the impact of educational leaders in this regard cannot be exaggerated. It is fundamental to recognize the many ways educational leaders can influence the retention of novice teachers. This involves providing effective mentorship and professional development opportunities, creating and supporting a positive and supportive work environment, and ensuring novice teachers have access to the resources and support imperative for success. Alicia shared:

> In my first year of teaching, I was lucky enough to have an incredibly supportive principal who provided me with the necessary resources and guidance to succeed in my role. This support gave me the confidence to continue teaching despite the many challenges I faced.

When educational leaders prioritize the needs of novice teachers and provide them with mentorship, guidance, and resources, they can help boost their self-efficacy. By boosting their self-efficacy, leaders can help novice teachers feel confident and motivated, ultimately leading to long-term retention in education. April commented:

> When I first began teaching, I felt overwhelmed and doubtful of myself. However, my principal was incredibly supportive and provided me with the necessary resources and guidance to help me succeed. Her leadership helped me feel motivated and self-assured in my abilities. I believe that having an understanding leader is important for novice teachers, as it helps to build their self-efficacy and makes them feel valued and appreciated.

Sub-Question One

How do behaviors of leaders affect novice teachers? Novice teachers often look to their leaders for guidance, support, and feedback as they navigate the trials of their first few years in the education field. Leaders' behaviors can significantly impact novice teachers' experiences and ultimately affect their professional success and retention. When leaders prioritize the needs of their novice teachers and support them and opportunities for professional development, novice teachers are more likely to feel supported and motivated. Tasha noted in her journal:

Leaders who model a positive and inclusive workplace can foster a sense of community and belonging for novice teachers, like me, which has allowed me to persevere when things become difficult.

On the other hand, when leaders fail to provide sufficient support or exhibit negative behaviors such as nit-picking or condescending, novice teachers may feel discouraged and disconnected, leading to a higher turnover rate. Mandy wrote in her journal:

Changes in leadership are the one thing that scares me the most. A negative leader can change the dynamic completely. They can impact my career and moving from a supportive leader to an unsupportive one is something that can keep me up at night.

It is essential for leaders to recognize the influence they have on novice teachers and to strive to create a positive and supportive work environment that fosters growth and development.

Sub-Question Two

How does the educational environment affect novice teachers? The school climate and educational environment play a central role in novice teachers' experiences and success, and school leaders and administrators must highlight creating a positive and supportive culture that values and supports the growth and development of novice teachers.

School climate refers to the overall atmosphere and culture of the school, including the relationships within the building and the physical and emotional safety of the school environment. A positive and helpful school climate can help boost novice teachers' confidence, increase motivation, and encourage a sense of belonging and community within the school. Contrarily, an unreceptive or unsupportive school climate can lead to feelings of isolation, stress, and burnout, ultimately resulting in high turnover rates among novice teachers. Gerald noted:

> As a novice teacher, I have experienced both positive and negative school cultures, and I can say confidently the positive ones have had a noteworthy impact on my growth as a new teacher. When the school culture is supportive, collaborative, and comprehensive, it creates an area where novice teachers feel comfortable asking for help, sharing ideas and resources, and taking risks.

Sub-Question Three

How do cognitive factors affect novice teachers? Cognitive factors, such as knowledge, expectations, and attitudes, play a significant role in the success of novice teachers. As novice teachers enter the profession, they bring a certain level of knowledge and expectations that shape their attitudes toward teaching and their ability to succeed. Much of their knowledge comes from their college coursework and some from their personal experiences, but their knowledge base is vast. Linda shared:

> Coming into the profession, I knew I honestly had no idea what it was really like to be in the classroom. No college class really prepared me for what it was like to be in charge of my own room. I learned quickly that I had a lot to learn.

Novice teachers, fresh from college campuses, may need help to meet the profession's demands. Expectations also have a significant impact on novice teachers. Those who enter the profession

with high expectations for themselves and their students are more likely to be motivated and persistent in their efforts to succeed.

Much like knowledge has a role in novice teachers' success. Attitudes play a role as well. Attitudes are also vital cognitive factors that determine the success of novice teachers. Positive attitudes towards teaching and learning can help to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters teacher and student success. On the other hand, negative attitudes can lead to an unsupportive and demotivating environment that can negatively impact student outcomes.

Summary

Significant themes developed linked to leadership support and its impact on novice teacher retention. These themes were (1) support, (2) self-efficacy, (3) school culture, and (4) relationships. Each of these themes leads to the importance of leadership and their support of novice teachers, increasing novice teacher retention. Supportive school leaders and school cultures improved self-efficacy, and beneficial relationships between novice teachers, their colleagues, and students make novice teachers' challenges less complicated. These themes each point to pieces of the retention puzzle to retain novice teachers. Each of the developed themes is grounded in multiple participant responses. All themes work together to demonstrate how novice teachers experience leadership support. Each theme relates to the main central research question guiding the study, and many align visibly with the theoretical framework that shaped this study, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers in a southeastern United States school district. A hermeneutic phenomenology research design was implemented to complete this study. Twelve participants' experiences were analyzed, addressing one central research question and three sub-questions using Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. This chapter includes a discussion of the thematic findings, interpretations, and policy implications. The theoretical and empirical interpretations, as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study, are also discussed. Finally, I provided my recommendations for future studies, which will be shared before concluding the chapter.

Discussion

The following sections discuss the findings of the study. The thematic findings are discussed in summary, followed by interpretations made by the researcher from the data. The following sections detail the researcher's interpretations before concluding with implications for policy and practice.

Summary of Thematic Findings

This study incorporated a hermeneutic phenomenological design that allowed novice teachers to share their lived experiences with leadership support and the influence such support had on their decision to continue to teach. This design was chosen to identify the commonalities between novice teachers' lived experiences and leadership support. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. The sample included 12 novice teachers, those with no more than five years of experience, currently teaching at the elementary level in a southeastern United

States school district. The data collection methods used to achieve triangulation were individual interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts. The information attained from these data sources was analyzed using coding and bracketing. Four themes were gleaned from the data to provide a response to the research questions. The four themes were support, self-efficacy, school culture, and relationships.

Interpretation of Findings

Novice teachers thrive in environments where they are supported by leadership. Each participant discussed in their individual interview and collectively in the focus group how integral support had been in their teaching career. This support was not only from their administrators, particularly the principal, but it also came from professional development and mentor programs. Participants recognized their principals as integral in their development as teachers and valued their support highly. Participants also appreciated professional development that provided relevant resources and an outlet of support outside of their school buildings. Lastly, participants gave praise to mentor programs and mentors. Veteran teachers willing to serve as mentors provide great real-world support for novice teachers.

Self-efficacy is integral in determining participants' abilities to persevere in facing challenges. Participants agreed some factors influence their self-efficacy. However, self-efficacy and positive self-efficacy are crucial pieces that allow novice teachers to overcome challenges within the classroom. Many factors influence self-efficacy, but participants' shared leadership and school culture are two of the most predominant ones. Self-efficacy for most of them was the driving force that allowed them to show up in the most challenging of environments.

Novice teachers enjoy working in a positive environment and one in which they feel welcome and able to be vulnerable. Participants noted going to work in an environment that is

enjoyable and welcoming makes a difference in their performance. A positive school culture cultivates a willingness to learn and a desire to show up to work every day. Participants shared in a positive school culture, they feel supported and safe to be vulnerable in their new profession. A positive school culture supports professional and personal growth in novice and veteran teachers.

Relationships among colleagues and students are a motivating force for novice teachers. The relationships participants discussed were the relationships with their colleagues and the relationships they have in their classrooms with their students. Each of these relationships plays a valuable role in the success of novice teachers. Relationships with their colleagues allowed novice teachers to receive support, share resources, and develop their skills in a safe environment. While their relationships with their students differ, those relationships are often referred to as the reason for their perseverance. Relationships are an essential part of a novice teacher's beginning years.

Quality Support Matters Most

Novice teachers need support. They need support from administrators, their colleagues, professional development, and mentors. However, this support cannot just be any support; they need quality support that speaks to the needs of novice teachers. New teachers who work with impactful and strong professionals within the confines of well-thought-out programs, professional development, and support show more significant success in lesson planning, classroom management, delivery, and student engagement (Dreer, 2021; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Matlach & Potemski, 2014).

Quality support for novice teachers is essential to their success and long-term retention in education. Novice teachers face many challenges in their first few years of teaching, which include acclimating to new curricula, managing classrooms, and building relationships with their

students and colleagues (Anthony et al., 2019). Without quality support, these challenges can quickly become overwhelming for novice teachers, leading to feelings of stress, burnout, and even choosing to leave the profession; their difficulties can be relieved or heightened, depending on their support (Anthony et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016).

There should be a focus on mentorship, guidance, and creating a positive and supportive school culture for novice teachers to provide quality support. It is fundamental to acknowledge the importance of supporting novice teachers and to work towards creating a culture that supports growth within schools. Quality support fosters inclusivity and promotes open communication, collaboration, and a sense of community among staff, students, and all stakeholders.

Working Environment

Novice teachers need a working environment that is conducive to their needs and supports them in the face of new challenges. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, participants referenced a conducive working environment that fosters collaboration and growth. Teachers who graded their working conditions as better and more satisfactory had lower attrition rates (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016; Stewart & Janksy, 2022). Participants noted when their administration sets a tone of support, guidance, and positivity, the working environment becomes one they want to work in. Novice teachers are more likely to remain in a working environment that is positive and encouraging. A positive working environment can help boost novice teacher's self-efficacy and motivation, thus increasing their possibility of staying in the profession long-term.

Flows From the Top Down

How novice teachers are perceived, accepted, and supported flows from the top down. It all begins with the administration present within the building. Principals have a much more significant role than noted in ensuring novice teachers are supported in their buildings. Participants reported in interviews and a focus group how influential their principal was in their classroom practices and their self-efficacy. Principals have a vital role in setting the tone of their buildings. They could establish norms and implement practices that support the development of novice teachers.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study demonstrates the need to develop policies and practices to ensure novice teachers are adequately tended to increase the number of teachers in the profession and combat the increasing rate of those choosing to leave the profession within their first five years. The policy implications involve developing policies with novice teachers in mind at school and district levels, including mentoring and service standards for novice teachers. The implications for practice relate to the participants' need for support and guidance and fostering positive school cultures that promote collaboration and collegiality. Each of these is a worthwhile endeavor due to teacher shortages and the need to provide novice teachers with the best environment to learn and grow.

Implications for Policy

The results of this study offer implications for the policy set by school districts to ensure novice teachers have adequate support, mentors, and the resources needed during their formative years of teaching. Participants revealed the importance of administration in their beginning years and their role in shaping self-efficacy, school culture, and relationships within their school

buildings. School districts may implement an evaluation system for administrators to be completed by novice teachers focusing on these aspects. Principals actively involved in novice teachers' formative years make an influential difference in their experiences.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study also offer implications for practice that could affect novice teachers and their experiences in the beginning years. Principals need to take an active and vested interest in developing their novice teachers. There needs to be norms and expectations in place of a school culture that promotes collaboration and collegiality that flows from the top down. Administrators must ensure they have a presence in mentor-mentee relationships and encourage their development through open collaboration and communication. Participants shared how valuable mentors are, and mentor programs should become a common practice across schools. These relationships offer individualized real-time support for novice teachers while they are in their classrooms. Mentors should be an extension of support for novice teachers. Additionally, professional development should be tailored to the needs of novice teachers. While most participants found professional helpful development, there is a need for sessions tailored to the needs of novice teachers.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The following sections discuss the empirical and theoretical implications of this study. The empirical implications further join the data from this study with the existing research on leadership support and its influence on novice teacher retention. The theoretical implications are provided through the social cognitive theory, which is the theoretical framework for this study.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of this study suggest some alignment with previous literature about teacher retention. The areas of alignment include the importance of relationships and the working environment. The participants expressed the importance of their relationships with their colleagues and students. Positive relationships between teachers and administrators increase teacher retention rates (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Pressley, 2021; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Furthermore, relationships with a teacher may be the only positive and stable relationship a student experiences; this provides students with a sense of security (Archambault et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2016; Toste et al., 2015). When positive relationships are present within school buildings, teachers thrive. Additional empirical research supported the importance of the working environment for teachers or the school culture. All participants noted how influential a school culture of collaboration was for their success in teaching. Growing empirical evidence suggests that school leaders' positive influence on staff creates a positive school culture (Debnam et al., 2021; De Smul et al., 2020; Forfang & Paulsen, 2021). Additionally, schools that have shown stability in teacher retention possess a culture where the principal and teachers are partners in teaching and learning while working together to promote school improvement and student achievement (Ingersoll et al., 2014). All of these implications align with and support the literature on teacher retention.

Theoretical Implications

This study was rooted in Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977). Social cognitive theory suggests that no one factor contributes to human behavior; instead, it is a blend of influences that impact the behaviors shown (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, the theory explains that knowledge acquisition and human behavior happen through aspects of personal, behavioral,

and environmental factors. The findings in this research study confirm the claims of the social cognitive theory. On many occasions, participants noted how various factors impact their behaviors and self-efficacy. Participants' personal factors, such as attitudes and expectations, came into focus when discussing supportive administrators and the school environment. The environmental factors were noted in the norms present within their school settings, most serving where they are supported. Their behavioral factors are their self-efficacy and how it is influenced by each of the other components of the social cognitive theory.

Additionally, the results of this study support Astin's (1977, 1991, 1993) input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model. This model has been used in advanced education for decades. This model includes three major sections: inputs, environments, and outcomes. Within this study, the inputs (I) were novice teachers. Novice teachers were input into an environment (E) composed of relationships with their colleagues, relationships with their students, and support. The outcome is the produced self-efficacy of novice teachers. All these elements work together to influence novice teachers' self-efficacy. Figure 1 shows a demonstration of the I-E-O of this study.

Figure 1

Input-Environment-Output Model
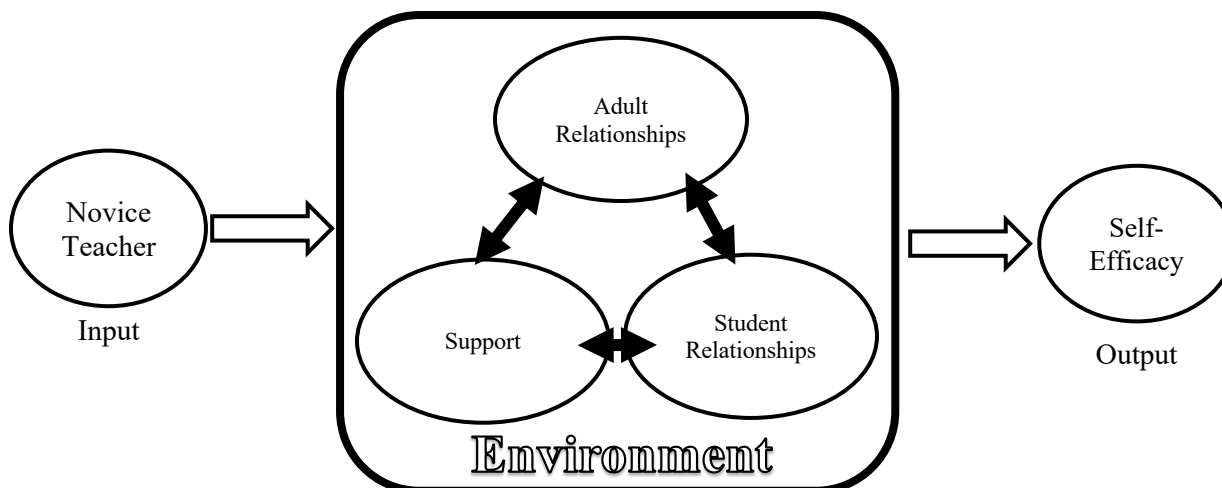
Limitations and Delimitations

This section provides a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of this study. Limitations are those factors out of the researcher's control. These are elements related to the site and participants. Delimitations are chosen areas of focus that disqualify other factors from influencing the research. The delimitations of this study helped define its constraints.

Limitations

This study is limited in its transferability and application since it occurred in a particular location in the country. The results may have been different in another part of the country. Also, the results are limited due to the limitations in the sample. Participants in this study met the specific criteria of being novice teachers with no more than five years of teaching. This limitation allowed the study to focus on a particular group to address a gap in the literature. Additionally, all participants were volunteered to participate. The sample size included 12 participants, 10 females and two males.

Delimitations

This study involved purposeful delimitations set by the researcher. The sample only included novice teachers who taught at the elementary level. This delimitation was chosen to ensure the participants had a common theme. An additional delimitation of this study was the decision to use hermeneutic phenomenology over transcendental phenomenology. This design was chosen such that a truly realistic and descriptive understanding of novice teachers' lived experiences with leadership supports and self-efficacy.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on participants who only taught at the elementary level within the same school district. Additionally, the participants had no more than five years of teaching experience. Based on the results, recommendations for future research are provided.

Future research may include similar participants but take place in a different location. This could mean a separate area of the same state, a different state, or a different country. Results could be compared, and additional transferability could be added. This recommendation could reveal if novice teachers in other places share the same experiences with the phenomenon. Future research could also include novice teachers across additional grade levels. In doing this, results may reveal how lived experiences among novice teachers differ based on the school setting. Another recommendation for future research is a potential quantitative study in which the researcher uses a Likert scale to measure satisfaction with different aspects of self-efficacy. This may provide additional information about how highly novice teachers rank variables like school culture, support, and relationships and their impact on self-efficacy and retention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of novice teachers with leadership support and its influence on self-efficacy. A hermeneutic phenomenology research design allowed novice teachers to share their lived experiences with leadership support and how it has influenced their self-efficacy. In this study, participants completed individual interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts. This study was rooted in the social cognitive theory. Since social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977b) is often used as a framework for human behavior, the theory aimed to guide an understanding of novice teacher retention behaviors. The sample for this study was composed of n novice teachers with

no more than five years of teaching experience. This study utilized van Manen's procedures for analysis through bracketing and coding. As a result of the analysis process, four themes emerged: support, self-efficacy, school culture, and relationships. Participants shared how vital support is for not only their self-efficacy but also for retention efforts. The school culture promotes a willingness to come to work and an excitement to be at work, and the relationships they create with their colleagues, students, and mentors are integral to their success. Finally, participants shared that much of what matters to them flows from the top down. Retention all begins with the leadership in the building.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 14, 2023

Lauren Stripling
Heather Strafaccia

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-804 Exploring Leadership Support and its Influence on Self-Efficacy: The Lived Experiences of Novice Teachers

Dear Lauren Stripling, Heather Strafaccia,

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

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Permission Request

Human Resources Director
South Georgia School District

████████████████████

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Exploring Leadership Support and Its Influence on Self-Efficacy: The Lived Experiences of Novice Teachers, and the purpose of my research is to explore and better understand the support needed by novice teachers from the teachers' perspective within a rural South Georgia school district that would increase teacher retention.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct research in the elementary schools in the South Georgia School District.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview and participate in a focus group. Participants will be asked to write a reflective letter to their first-year selves. Participants will be asked to review transcripts of the interview and focus group to ensure accuracy. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,
Lauryn Stripling
Ph.D. Candidate
Liberty University

Appendix C

Permission Letter

Lauryn Stripling
Ph. D. Candidate
Liberty University

██████████████████████

Dear ████████████████████

After a careful review of your research proposal entitled Exploring Leadership Support and Its Influence on Self-Efficacy: The Lived Experiences of Novice Teachers. I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study within the Dougherty County School System and contact our faculty/staff/others and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

I grant permission for Lauryn Stripling to contact novice teachers at the elementary level to invite them to participate in her research study.

Sincerely,

████████████████████

Human Resource Director

████████████████████

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers at a southern Georgia school district, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be at least 18 years of age, have no more than five years of teaching experience, and teach at one of the 14 elementary schools. Participants will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded, one-on-one interview and an audio-recorded focus group and write a reflective letter to their first-year selves. It should take approximately three hours to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

If you meet my participant criteria, please complete this screening survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DCBXXCG. I will contact you to schedule an interview.

A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Lauryn Stripling
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E

Recruitment Letter Follow-Up

Dear Potential Participants,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. Two weeks ago, you were sent an email inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is July 7, 2023.

Participants must be at least 18 years old, have no more than five years of teaching experience, and teach at one of the 14 elementary schools. Participants will be asked to participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview, and an audio-recorded focus group, and write a reflective letter to their first-year selves. It should take approximately 3 hours to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please complete this screening survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DCBXXCG. If you meet my participant criteria, I will contact you to schedule an interview.

A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Lauryn Stripling
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix F

Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring Leadership Support and its Influence on Self-Efficacy: The Lived Experiences of Novice Teachers
Principal Investigator: Lauryn Stripling, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

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Invitation to be part of a Research Study

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You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years or older, a teacher with at most five years of teaching experience, and teach at one of the 14 elementary schools. 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.

<div align="center">

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

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The purpose of the study is to understand the retention influence of leadership support for novice teachers at a southern Georgia school district. At this stage in the research, the retention influence of leadership support will be generally defined as the systems available to novice teachers that raise levels of morality and motivation, influencing new teachers to continue in the education field (Burns, 1978).

<div align="center">

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:
1. Participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview. This should last no more than 30-45 minutes.
2. Participate in a focus group that will be audio recorded with your peers. This should last no more than 45 minutes to an hour.
3. Answer journal prompts using a link. This should take no more than 45 minutes to an hour.

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How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

<div align="center">

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- 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.
- If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

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/phone number 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. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Lauryn Stripling. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ███████████ ██████████████ .

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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is 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 study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix G

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position.

    CRQ

2. What skills have educational leaders modeled for you? SQ1

3. What instructional strategies have educational leaders modeled for you? SQ1

4. What classroom practices have you implemented from collaboration with colleagues?

    SQ1

5. What has contributed to your perseverance in teaching so far? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3

6. What has shaped your expectations of yourself as a teacher? SQ2

7. What has influenced your attitudes toward your teaching career? SQ2

8. How have leaders influenced your teaching career? SQ2

9. What personal development has influenced perseverance in your teaching career? SQ2

10. What influences your classroom practices? SQ3

11. How would you describe the accessibility of educational leaders? SQ3

12. How would you characterize your autonomy in the classroom? SQ3

13. How has your educational community influenced your perseverance in your teaching

    career? SQ3

14. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your perseverance in the teaching

    career that we have not yet discussed? CRQ

Appendix H

Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe a successful teacher? SQ1

2. What is the biggest challenge in teaching? SQ2

3. Describe a validating moment in your teaching career. SQ2

4. How has a professional development experience changed your teaching effectiveness? SQ2 & SQ3

5. What is your proudest moment in teaching? SQ1, 2, &3

Appendix I

Journal Prompts

1. How has your vision of being an educator been influenced over time?

2. What aspects of teaching do you wish educational leaders knew about you?

3. How have you overcome challenges you have faced during your teaching career?

4. How have you made the biggest difference in your school?

5. What about teaching scares you? Why?